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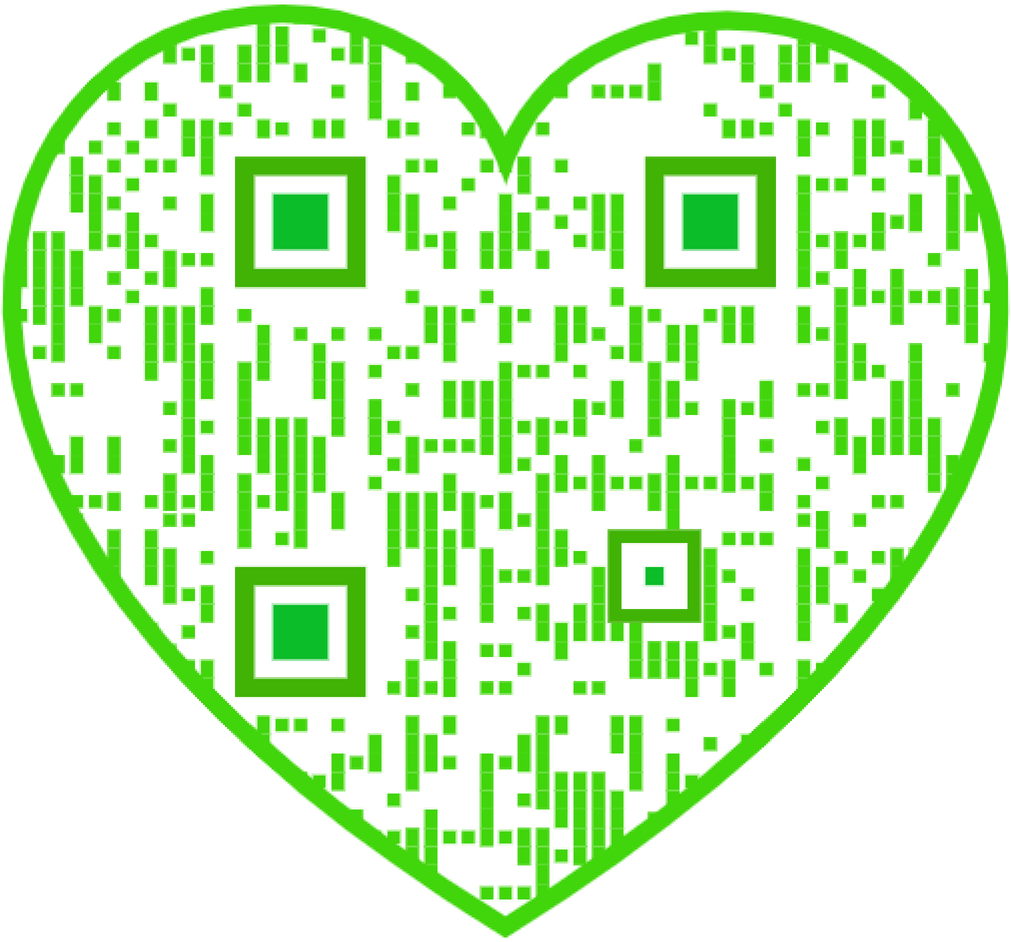

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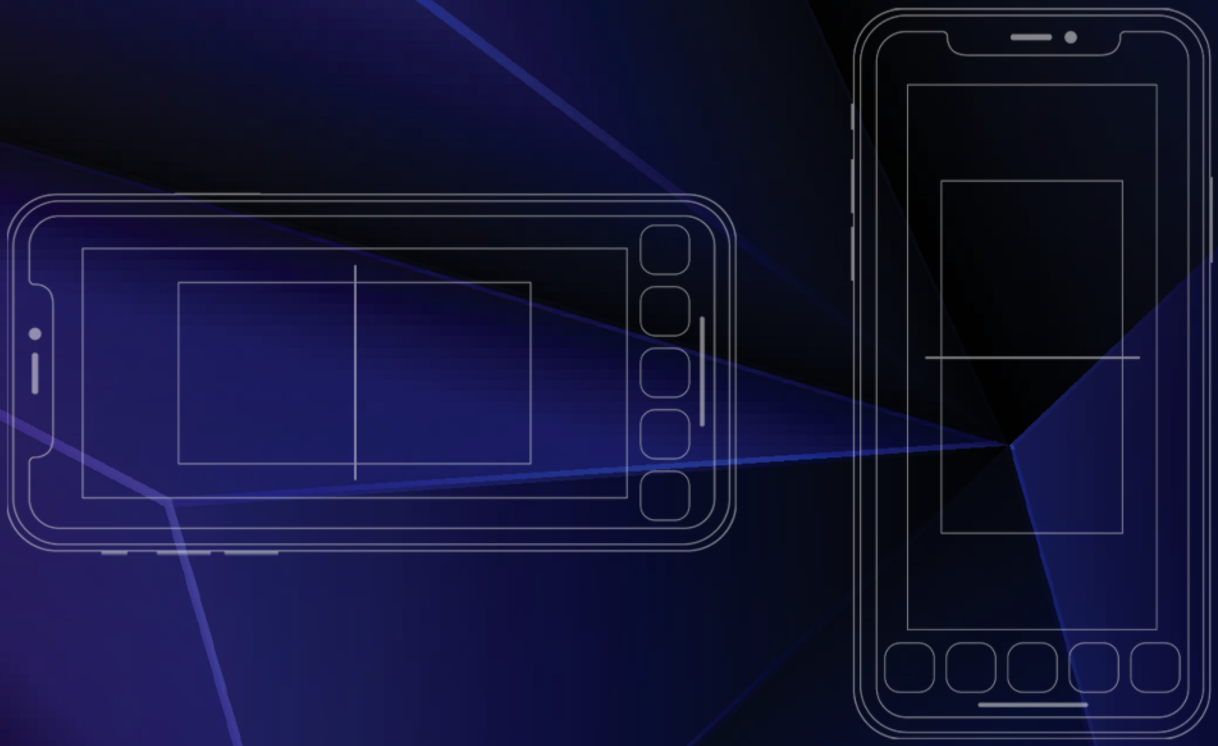

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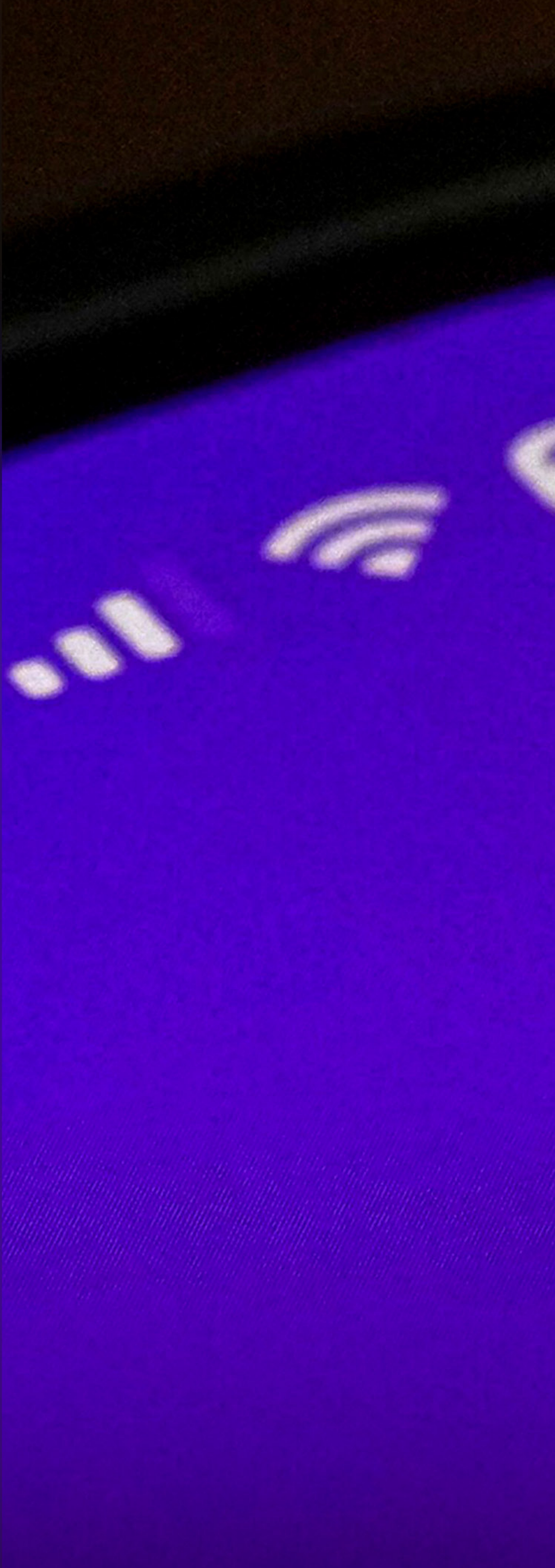
HOUSE LAWMAKERS PUSH TO BAN AI APP DEEPSEEK FROM US GOVERNMENT DEVICES



A bipartisan duo in the the U.S. House is proposing legislation to ban the Chinese artificial intelligence app DeepSeek from federal devices, similar to the policy already in place for the popular social media platform TikTok.

Reps. Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., and Darin LaHood, R-Ill. introduced the "No DeepSeek on Government Devices Act," which would ban federal employees from using the Chinese AI app on government-owned electronics. They cited the Chinese government's ability to use the app for surveillance and misinformation as reasons to keep it away from federal networks.

100
DeepSeek

Image: Jeff Chiu

"The Chinese Communist Party has made it abundantly clear that it will exploit any tool at its disposal to undermine our national security, spew harmful disinformation, and collect data on Americans," Gottheimer said in a statement. "We simply can't risk the CCP infiltrating the devices of our government officials and jeopardizing our national security."

The proposal comes after the Chinese software company in December published an AI model that performed at a competitive level with models developed by American firms like OpenAI, Meta, Alphabet and others. DeepSeek purported to develop the model at a fraction of the cost of its American counterparts. A January research paper about DeepSeek's capabilities raised alarm bells and prompted debates among policymakers and leading Silicon Valley financiers and technologists.

The Associated Press previously reported that DeepSeek has computer code that could send some user login information to a Chinese state-owned telecommunications company that has been barred from operating in the United States, according to the security research firm Feroot.

Gottheimer cited security concerns as the main reason for introducing the bill.

Image: Michael Brochestein

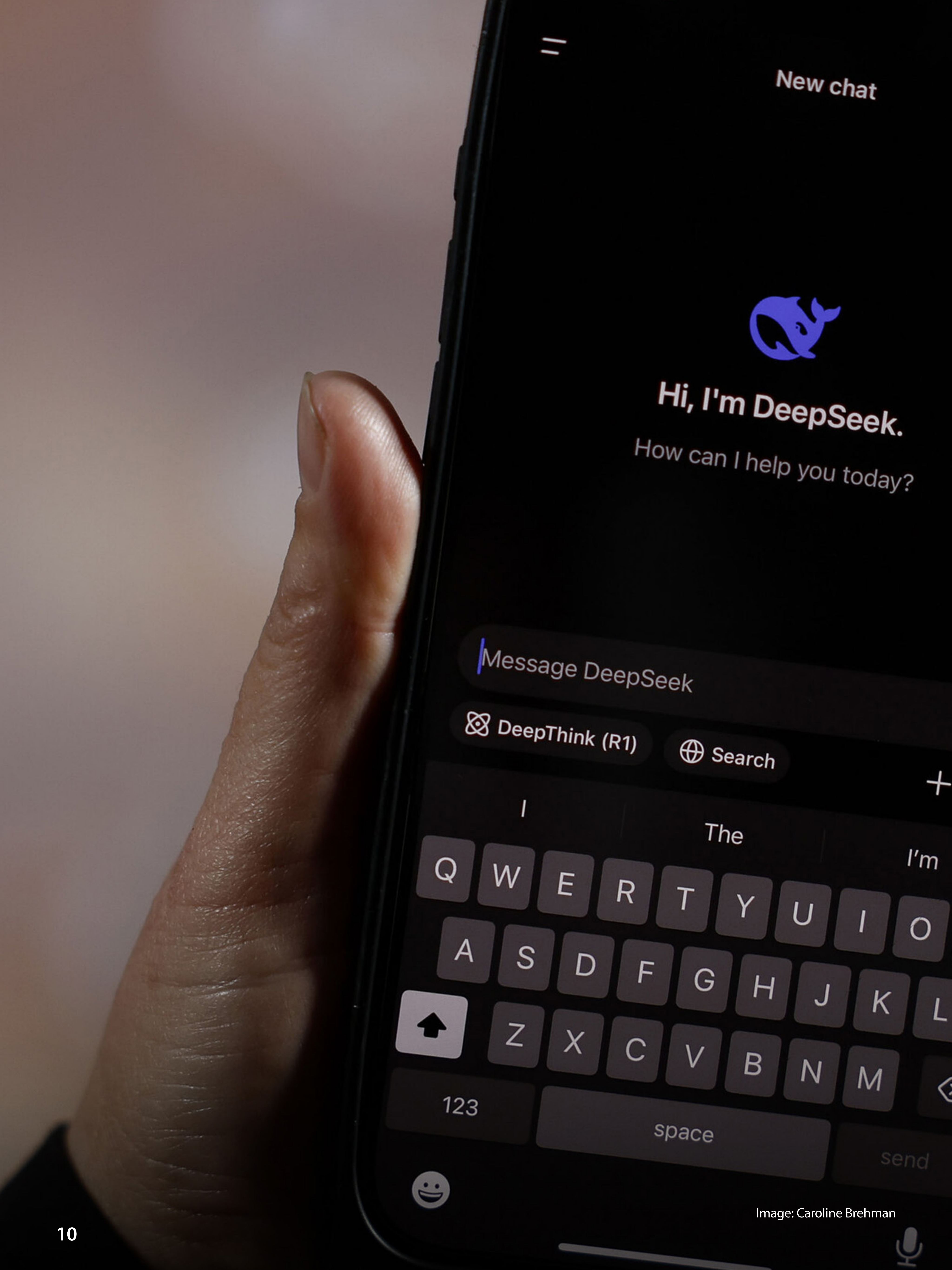

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Image: Caroline Brehman

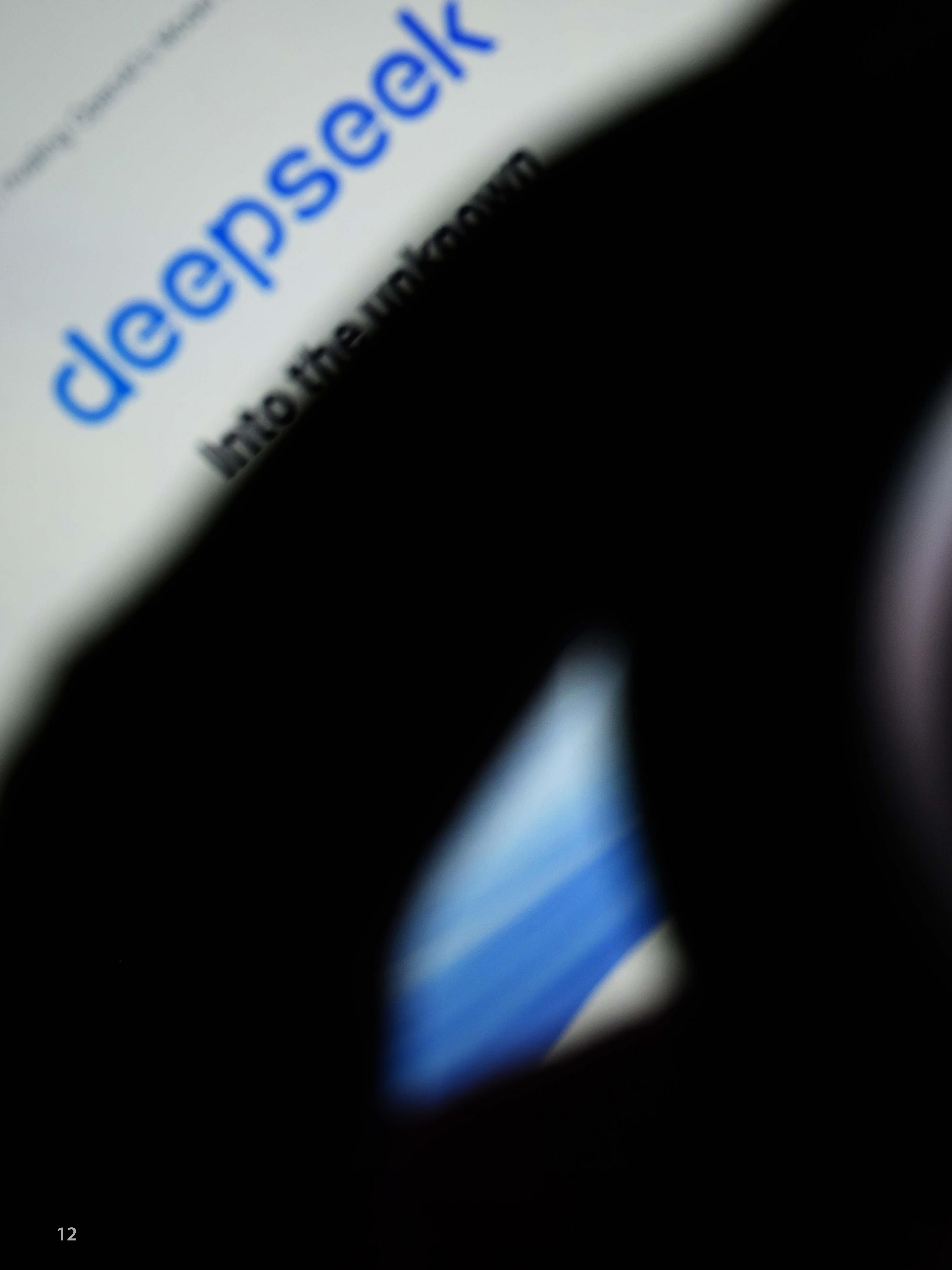
"It was enough of an alarm that I thought we should immediately ban it on all government devices and make it clear to the public of the risks. I think that's a critical first step," Gottheimer told The Associated Press. "Americans should know the impact on their personal privacy and data, especially because we know that Americans are sharing proprietary information on AI chatbots, highly sensitive information, documents, contracts, and the like."

Gottheimer added that he believed all members of Congress should be briefed on DeepSeek's surveillance capabilities and that Congress should further investigate its capabilities.

The churn over AI is coming at a moment of heightened competition between the U.S. and China in a range of areas, including technological innovation. The U.S. has levied tariffs on Chinese goods, restricted Chinese tech firms like Huawei from being used in government systems and banned the export of state of the art microchips thought to be needed to develop the highest end AI models.

Last year, Congress and then-President Joe Biden approved a divestment of the popular social media platform TikTok from its Chinese parent company or face a ban across the U.S.; that policy is now on hold. President Donald Trump, who originally proposed a ban of the app in his first term, signed an executive order last month extending a window for a long term solution before the legally required ban takes effect.

In 2023, Biden banned TikTok from federal-issued devices.


deepseek
Into the unknown

I'm DeepSeek.
I help you to

Image: Leon Neal

“The technology race with the Chinese Communist Party is not one the United States can afford to lose,” LaHood said in a statement. “This commonsense, bipartisan piece of legislation will ban the app from federal workers’ phones while closing backdoor operations the company seeks to exploit for access. It is critical that Congress safeguard Americans’ data and continue to ensure American leadership in AI.”

The bill would single out DeepSeek and any AI application developed by its parent company, the hedge fund High-Flyer, as subject to the ban. The legislation includes exceptions for national security and research purposes that would allow federal employers to study DeepSeek.

Some lawmakers wish to go further. A bill proposed by Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., would bar the import of export of any AI technology from China writ large, citing national security concerns.

Several countries have moved to ban DeepSeek’s AI chat bot, either entirely or on government devices, citing security concerns.

Last month, Italy’s data protection authority blocked access to the application in a move it said would protect users’ data and announced an investigation into the companies behind the chatbot. Taiwan announced that it banned government departments from using Deepseek’s AI. South Korea’s industry ministry has also temporarily blocked employee access to the app. Australia announced that it banned DeepSeek from government systems and devices.

In Texas, Gov. Greg Abbott issued an order banning both DeepSeek and RedNote -- a Chinese TikTok alternative -- from the state’s government-issued devices.

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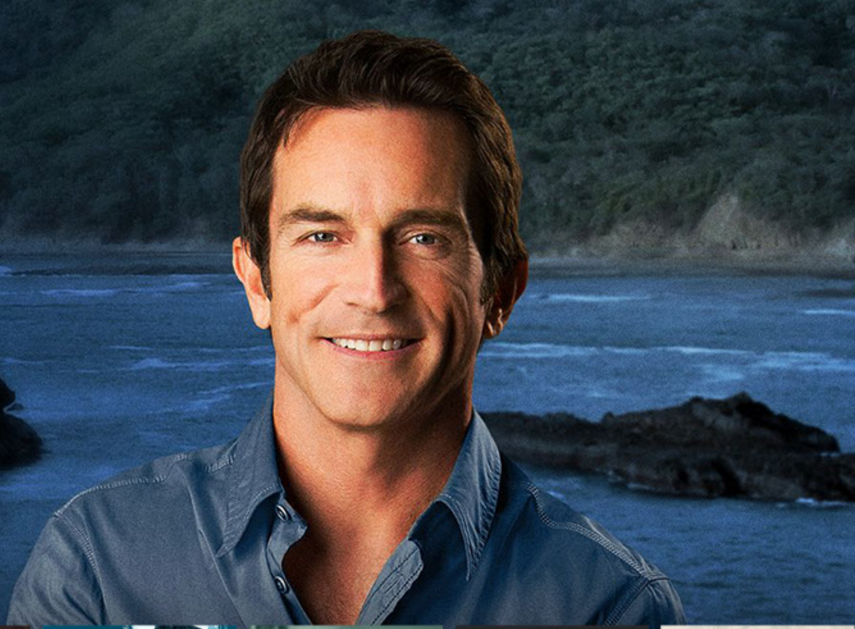

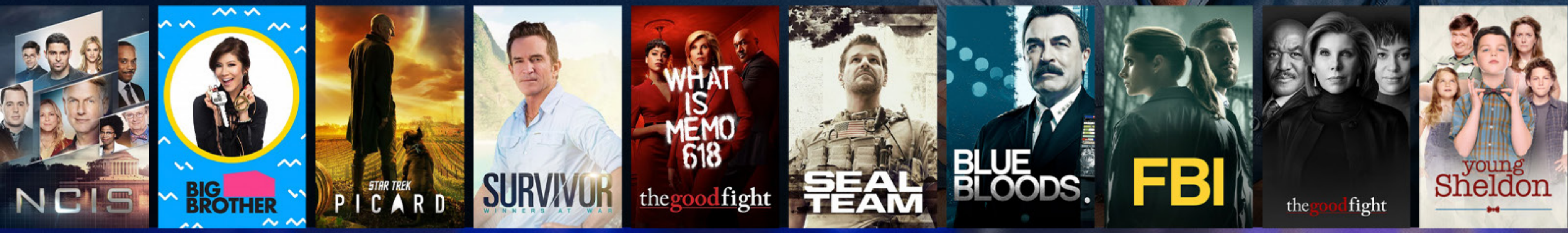
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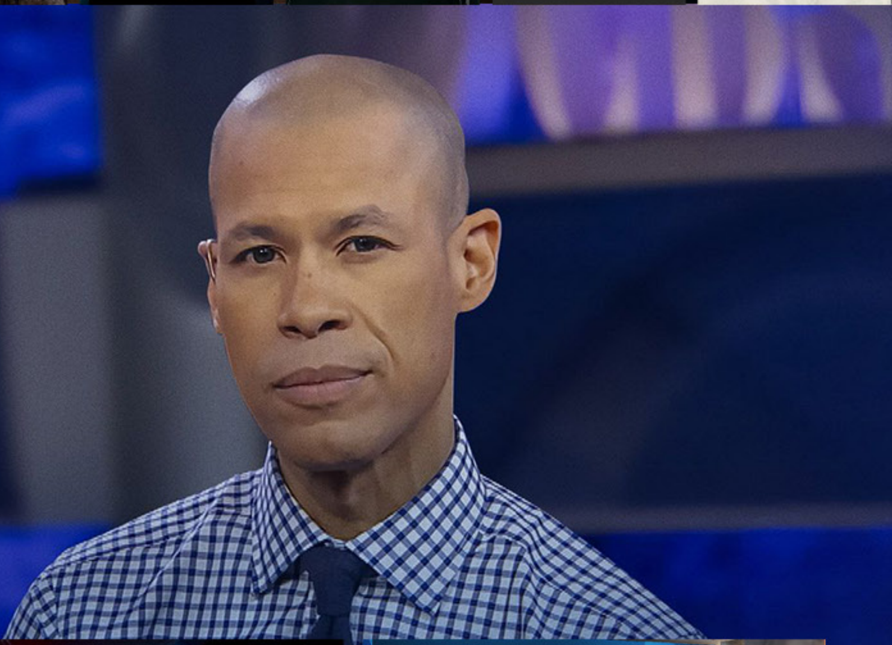

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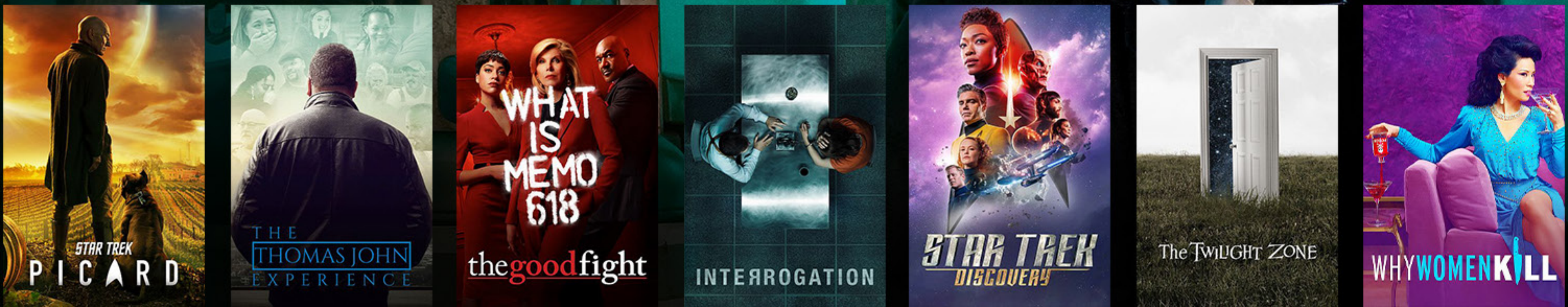
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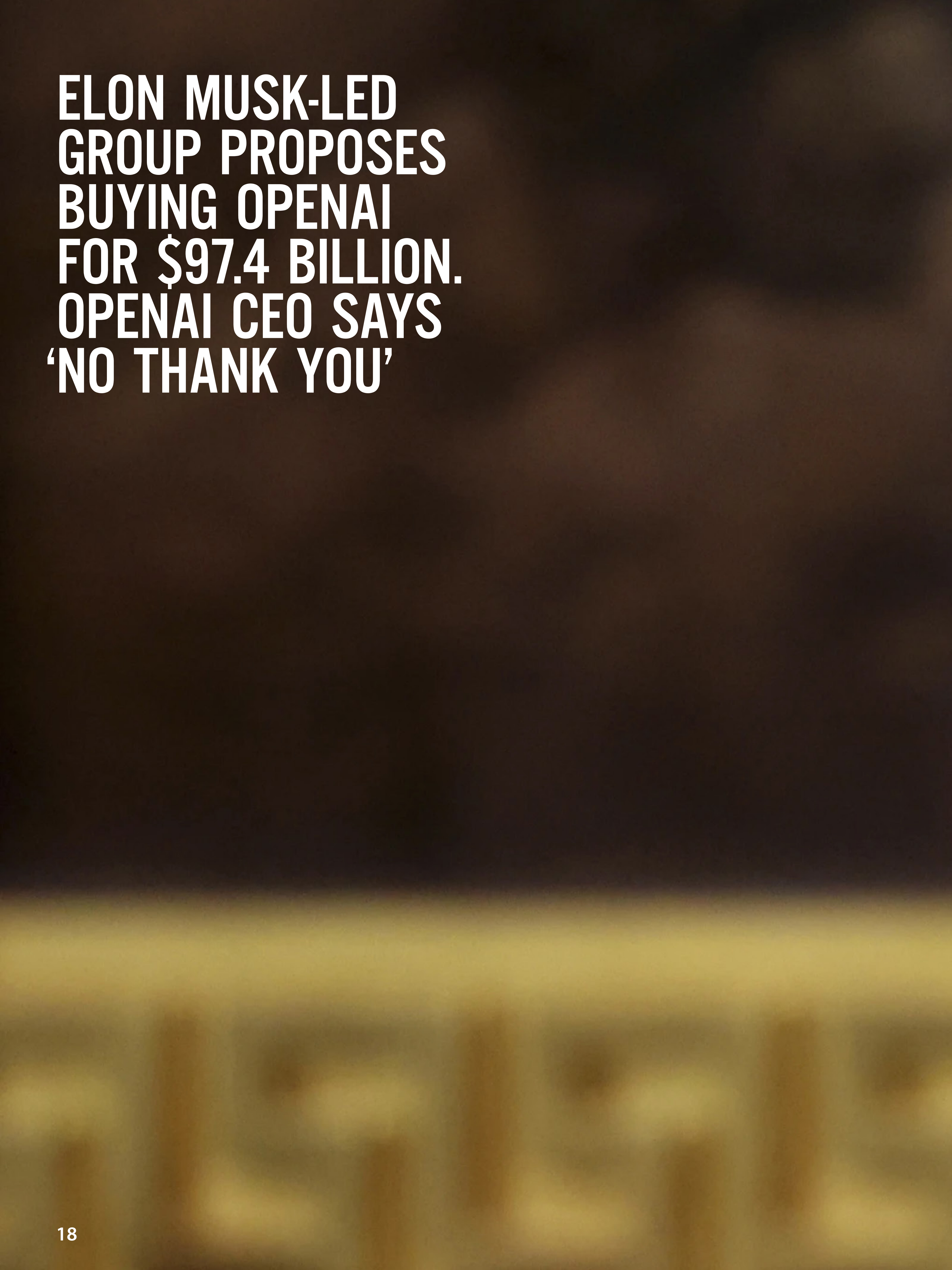


ELON MUSK-LED GROUP PROPOSES BUYING OPENAI FOR $97.4 BILLION. OPENAI CEO SAYS ‘NO THANK YOU’

A group of investors led by Elon Musk is offering about $97.4 billion to buy the nonprofit behind OpenAI, escalating a dispute with the artificial intelligence company that Musk helped found a decade ago.

Musk and his own AI startup, xAI, and a consortium of investment firms want to take control of the ChatGPT maker and revert it to its original charitable mission as a nonprofit research lab, according to Musk's attorney Marc Toberoff.

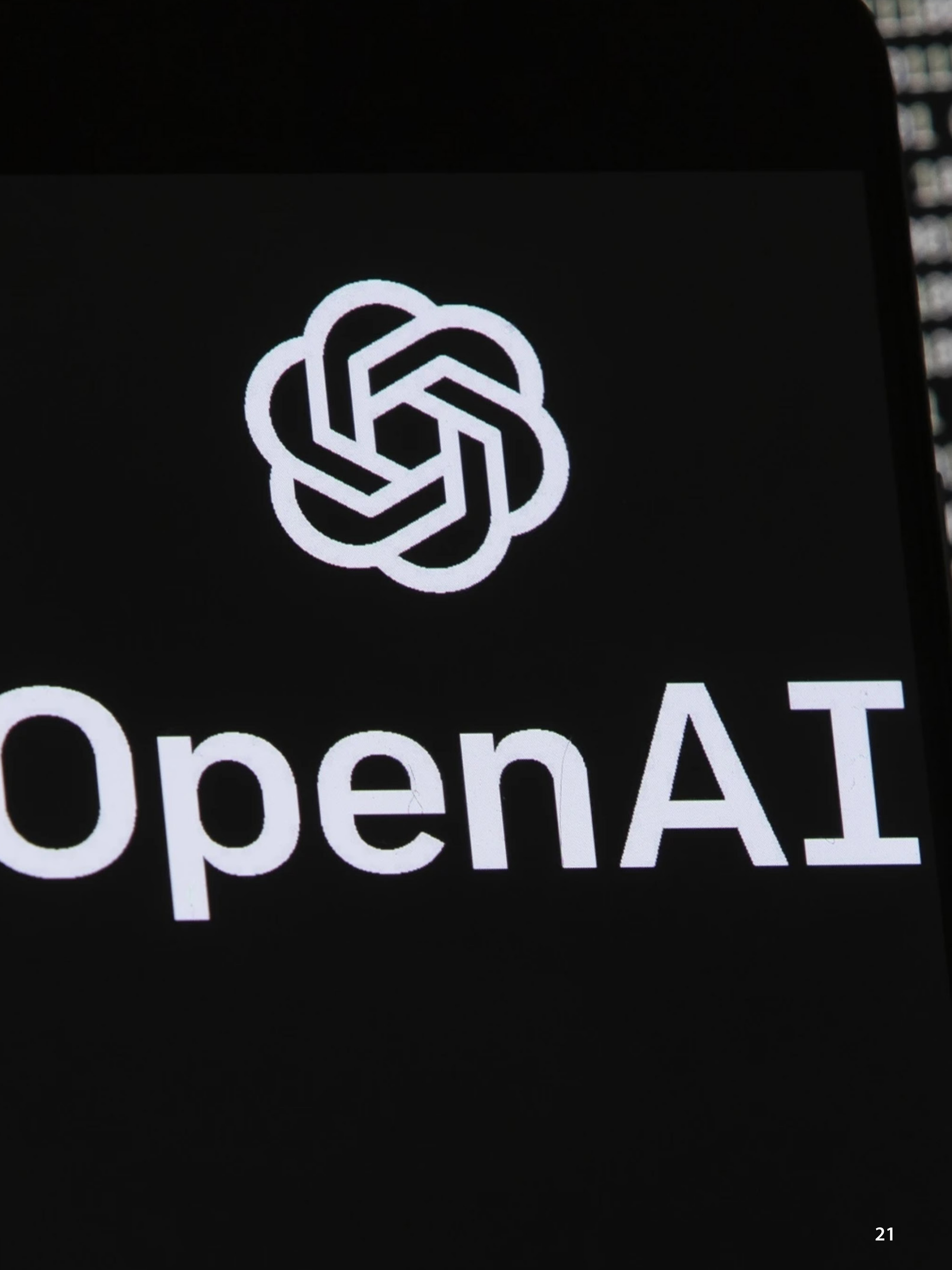
OpenAI CEO Sam Altman quickly rejected the unsolicited bid on Musk's social platform X, saying, "no thank you but we will buy Twitter for $9.74 billion if you want."

Musk bought Twitter, now called X, for $44 billion in 2022.

Musk and Altman, who together helped start OpenAI in 2015 and later competed over who should lead it, have been in a long-running feud over the startup's direction since Musk resigned from its board in 2018.

Musk, an early OpenAI investor and board member, sued the company last year, first in a California state court and later in federal court, alleging it had betrayed its founding aims as a nonprofit research lab that would benefit the public good by safely building better-than-human AI. Musk had invested about $45 million in the startup from its founding until 2018, Toberoff has said.

The sudden success of ChatGPT two years ago brought worldwide fame and a new revenue stream to OpenAI and also heightened the internal battles over the future of the organization and the advanced AI it was trying


OpenAI

to develop. Its nonprofit board fired Altman in late 2023. He came back days later with a new board.

Now a fast-growing business still controlled by a nonprofit board bound to its original mission, OpenAI last year announced plans to formally change its corporate structure. But such changes are complicated. Tax law requires money or assets donated to a tax-exempt organization to remain within the charitable sector.

If the initial organization becomes a for-profit, generally, a conversion is needed where the for-profit pays the fair market value of the assets to another charitable organization. Even if the nonprofit OpenAI continues to exist in some way, some experts argue it would have to be paid fair market value for any assets that get transferred to its for-profit subsidiaries.

Lawyers for OpenAI and Musk faced off in a California federal court last week as a judge weighed Musk's request for a court order that would block the ChatGPT maker from converting itself to a for-profit company.

U.S. District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers hasn't yet ruled on Musk's request but in the courtroom said it was a "stretch" for Musk to claim he will be irreparably harmed if she doesn't intervene to stop OpenAI from moving forward with its planned transition.

But the judge also raised concerns about OpenAI and its relationship with business partner Microsoft and said she wouldn't stop the case from moving to trial as soon as next year so a jury can decide.

"It is plausible that what Mr. Musk is saying is true. We'll find out. He'll sit on the stand," she said.

Along with Musk and xAI, others backing the bid announced this week include Baron Capital Group, Valor Management, Atreides Management, Vy Fund, Emanuel Capital Management and Eight Partners VC.

Toberoff said in a statement that if Altman and OpenAI's current board "are intent on becoming a fully for-profit corporation, it is vital that the charity be fairly compensated for what its leadership is taking away from it: control over the most transformative technology of our time."

Musk's attorney also shared a letter he sent in early January to the attorneys general of California, where OpenAI operates, and Delaware, where it is incorporated.

Since both state offices must "ensure any such transactional process relating to OpenAI's charitable assets provides at least fair market value to protect the public's beneficial interest, we assume you will provide a process for competitive bidding to actually determine that fair market value," Toberoff wrote, asking for more information on the terms and timing of that bidding process.

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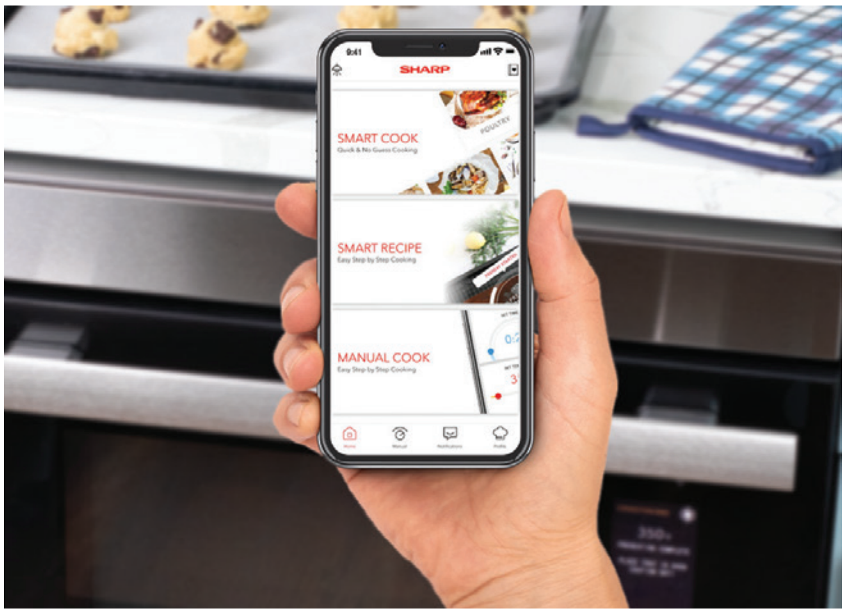
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HOW ELON MUSK $97.4 BILLION BID COMPLICATES MATTERS FOR OPENAI

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman has dismissed a $97.4 billion takeover bid led by rival Elon Musk, but the unsolicited offer could complicate Altman's push to transform the maker of ChatGPT into a for-profit company.

"We are not for sale," Altman said Tuesday at an artificial intelligence summit in Paris.

Musk's bid, announced Monday, is the latest in a bitter years-long battle with Altman over control of the AI startup they both helped found a decade ago as a nonprofit and is now a leading force in the global boom surrounding generative AI technology.

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“OpenAI has a mission,” Altman told France’s AI minister in an on-stage discussion Tuesday mobbed by tech industry workers and investors. “We are an unusual organization and we have this mission of making AGI benefit all humanity. And we are here to do that.”

Its stated aim since its founding in 2015 is to safely build futuristic, better-than-human AI known as artificial general intelligence, or AGI. Musk, an early investor and board member, quit OpenAI in 2018 after an internal power struggle left Altman in charge.

Their public feud has escalated over the past year as Musk sued OpenAI and is working to grow his own AI company called xAI, part of a business empire that includes Tesla, SpaceX and social media platform X. Musk also now holds power as a top adviser to President Donald Trump in reshaping the U.S. government, and has publicly questioned OpenAI’s Trump-backed private investment project for building AI data centers in the United States.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The offer complicates OpenAI’s plan to shift its structure away from its nonprofit roots to a company beholden to shareholders.

OpenAI’s nonprofit board will need to consider Musk’s offer. It’s not Altman alone who can accept or reject it, though the chair of the board, Bret Taylor, echoed Altman’s approach and declared “OpenAI is not for sale” at a Wall Street Journal event Tuesday in Palo Alto, California.

Taylor said Musk’s move was “largely a distraction” from the board’s fiduciary duty to its mission.

As a nonprofit board, said Taylor, "our job is very simple, which is to basically evaluate every strategic decision of the organization through that one test, which is, 'Does this actually further the mission of ensuring AGI benefits humanity?' And I have a hard time seeing how this would."

The board will need to weigh not just the value of the company's assets but also the value of controlling the company developing this technology. Musk's offer also seems to set a floor for how much the nonprofit should be paid if it does relinquish control of its subsidiaries.

Rose Chan Loui, executive director for the Lowell Milken Center on Philanthropy and Nonprofits at UCLA Law, said the board should consider the credibility of Musk's offer, including if he and his investors will pay in cash. And they should consider whether a new board under the control of Musk and other investors would be independent and what guarantees they can give about protecting its public mission.

Musk's $44 billion Twitter takeover in 2022 also started with an unsolicited offer and a legal fight with Twitter's board, which was also led by Taylor, a former Facebook and Salesforce executive. However, taking over OpenAI would be more complicated because of its charitable purpose.

"There is a legally binding purpose," said Jill Horwitz, a professor at UCLA School of Law. "It is the promise that was made to the public when OpenAI, the nonprofit, was formed. That promise is legally enforceable."

The sudden popularity of ChatGPT two years ago brought worldwide fame and new commercial possibilities to OpenAI and also heightened internal turmoil over the future of the organization and the advanced AI it was trying to develop. Its nonprofit board fired Altman in late 2023. He came back days later with a new board.

OPENAI'S NONPROFIT COMPLICATIONS

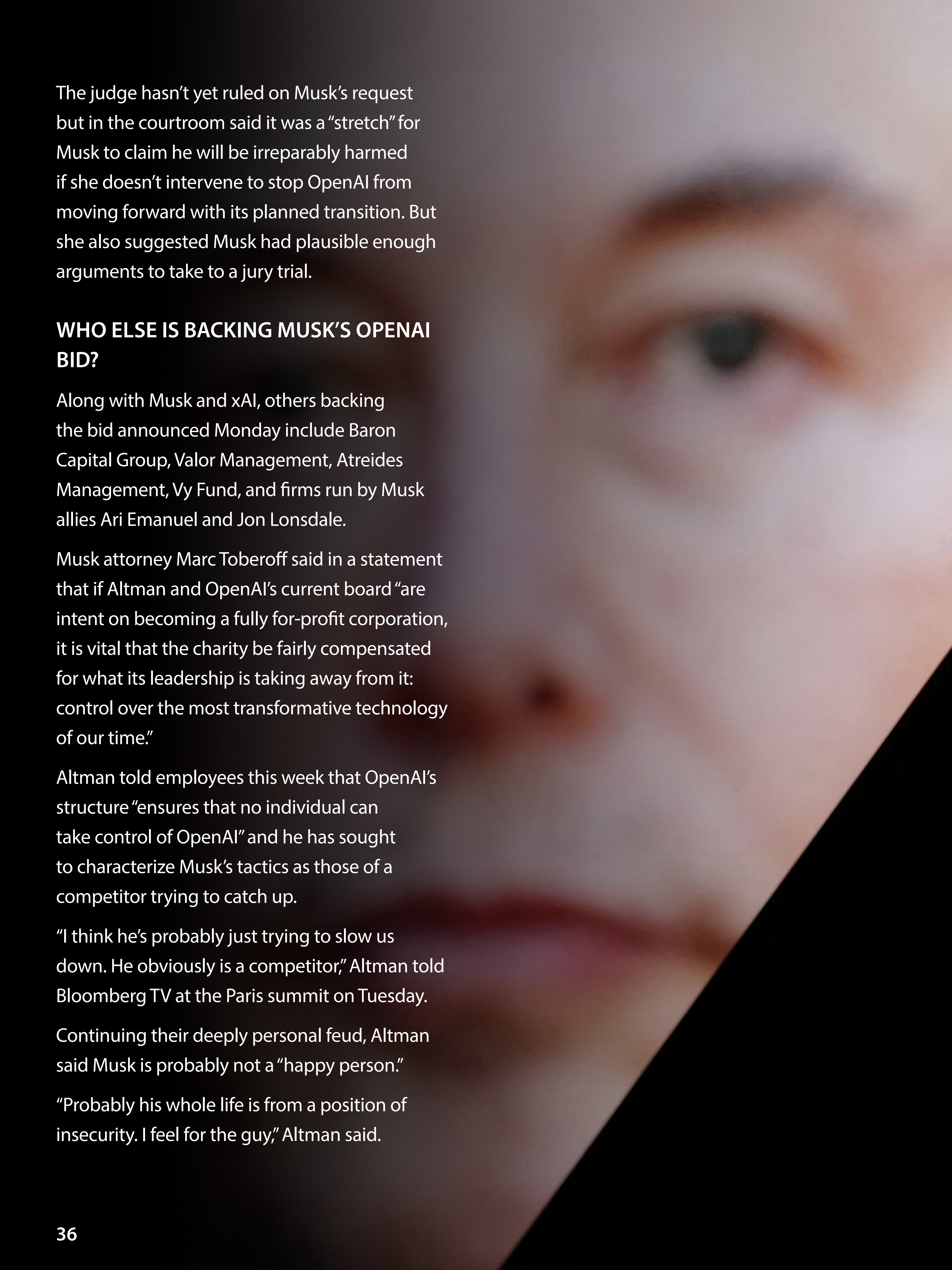
OpenAI's nonprofit purpose, as defined most recently in 2020, is "(to) ensure that artificial general intelligence benefits all of humanity, including by conducting and/or funding artificial intelligence research."

The question is, can it do that if it sells its assets and loses control of the company developing this technology?

"To make the promise to the world that you are bound by a legal purpose and to build with that promise, including telling your investors not to expect any returns and to think of your investments as more akin to a donation than an investment," said Horwitz. "And then to say once you've gotten big enough, 'You know what? We'd like to own this.' That seems like a real violation of the promise."

Musk sued OpenAI last year, first in a California state court and later in federal court, alleging it had betrayed its founding aims as a nonprofit research lab that would benefit the public good. A lawyer for Musk has said he invested about $45 million in the startup from its founding until 2018.

Lawyers for OpenAI and Musk faced off in a California federal court last week as a judge weighed Musk's request for a court order that would block OpenAI's for-profit conversion.



The judge hasn't yet ruled on Musk's request but in the courtroom said it was a "stretch" for Musk to claim he will be irreparably harmed if she doesn't intervene to stop OpenAI from moving forward with its planned transition. But she also suggested Musk had plausible enough arguments to take to a jury trial.

WHO ELSE IS BACKING MUSK'S OPENAI BID?

Along with Musk and xAI, others backing the bid announced Monday include Baron Capital Group, Valor Management, Atreides Management, Vy Fund, and firms run by Musk allies Ari Emanuel and Jon Lonsdale.

Musk attorney Marc Toberoff said in a statement that if Altman and OpenAI's current board "are intent on becoming a fully for-profit corporation, it is vital that the charity be fairly compensated for what its leadership is taking away from it: control over the most transformative technology of our time."

Altman told employees this week that OpenAI's structure "ensures that no individual can take control of OpenAI" and he has sought to characterize Musk's tactics as those of a competitor trying to catch up.

"I think he's probably just trying to slow us down. He obviously is a competitor," Altman told Bloomberg TV at the Paris summit on Tuesday.

Continuing their deeply personal feud, Altman said Musk is probably not a "happy person."

"Probably his whole life is from a position of insecurity. I feel for the guy," Altman said.

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EV MAKER SCOUT MOTORS WANTS TO SELL DIRECTLY TO BUYERS BUT CAN'T DO IT IN ITS HOME STATE

Volkswagen-backed Scout Motors is making a massive bet in the electric SUV market with a carefully cultivated experience that will allow some customers to buy the company's vehicle in minutes on an app and then use it to handle everything after from repairs to updates and upgrades.

But without some help from lawmakers, that will be impossible in South Carolina, where the company is pouring billions into its new auto plant and a Scout Motors experience like BMW's test track in Greer.

Image: Jeffrey Collins

Scout

Image: Jeffrey Collins

In a world where almost everything can be bought online, automobiles remain an exception. Supporters of the dealership model say the experience allows buyers to compare prices across several businesses.

Unlike a pair of pants, where color, style and size are about the only concerns, buying a car involves financing, state registration, taxes, regulations — and often a test drive.

South Carolina is one of about two dozen states that ban manufacturers from selling vehicles directly to consumers and instead require all new autos be purchased through a dealer. Scout would like to see that practice changed nationwide for all EV makers and figured it could start in its new backyard.

South Carolina also bans manufacturers from owning their own service centers, which means anyone who wants to own a Scout SUV must travel to another state to have it repaired or serviced.

People who back the dealership structure said online sales could lead to carmakers raising their own prices with less competition.

The dealership structure requires local business owners to back what they sell and assure buyers get quality service on their vehicles. Auto dealers often have close ties to their communities and cities could lose one of their biggest businesses and heftiest taxpayers.

“If for some reason the car is a lemon or the job isn’t getting done, they are the folks who live there, who pay their taxes and send their kids to school,” said Republican Sen. Larry Grooms, who runs the Senate Transportation Committee where any bill changing the rules would likely end up.

Scout is determined to get the law changed to help them as well as other EV makers like Tesla and Rivian. They have gone on a media blitz that includes stories in local outlets. They are also trying to secure support in a Republican-dominated state with an argument that consumers should be free to buy whatever they wish directly, without a middleman.

Scout also is armed with a 2000 Attorney General's Office opinion on the bill which would weeks later would become law and serve as the most recent major overhaul to South Carolina's laws on new car buying.

"If a manufacturer cannot sell his own product, but must constitutionally pass that product through a 'middle man,' then our understanding of the free market system is way off base. The Internet is a worldwide web for trade, not a local instrument for protectionism," wrote then-Republican state Attorney General Charlie Condon in the opinion, which is not binding and an educated guess on what a judge might do if someone sued over the law.

Scout officials say using a dealership-only business model would make the vehicles aimed at the under-$60,000 market too expensive and complicate what the company wants to be a seamless experience, from start to finish.

Gov. Henry McMaster touts the Scout plant in Blythewood as one of his biggest economic development scores The Republican has been to both the February 2024 groundbreaking of the massive facility and this month's ceremony

Image: Jeffrey Collins

Image: Jeffrey Collins

to mark work starting on a new $150 million interstate interchange the state is paying for to help get workers, parts and new SUVs in and out.

McMaster recently said he wants to protect dealers, but wants to let Scout sell directly, too.

"Over the last few years with the Internet and Amazon and all the others customers are looking for their freedom and that ability to order things direct without a middleman," McMaster said.

Scout is trying to find a niche in a growing but uncertain U.S. electric vehicle market. President Donald Trump's election could threaten the industry, both through ending tax credits and tariffs that could raise prices.

The original Scout Motors made gasoline-powered vehicles for about 20 years when it was owned by International Harvester. Production ended in 1980, but their shape and features continue to influence modern SUVs. Scouts have had a niche fanbase of collectors ever since.

The new Scout Motors is trying to tap into a mix of nostalgia and technology. Key to Scout's success will be its app, Scout Vice President of Growth Cody Thacker said.

He envisions a Scout buyer scrolling through types and colors, performance and comfort options and hundreds of other choices. Financing, titling and paperwork would all be handled in minutes instead of the hours it takes at dealerships. That custom SUV could then be delivered to the buyer's door.

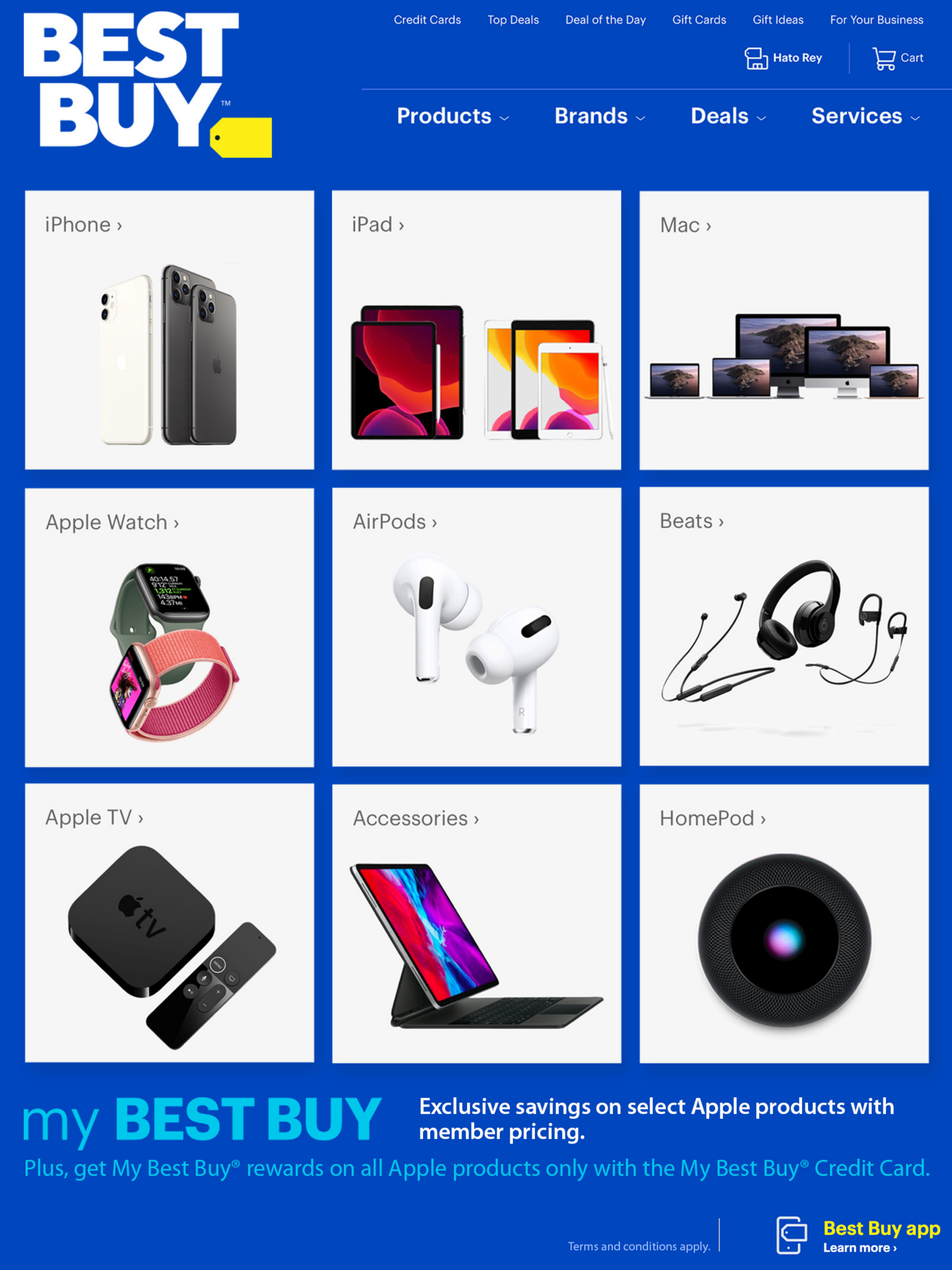
"You see the point of contention and the huge opportunity," Thacker said.

Scout's plant in Blythewood, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) north of Columbia, is expected to open in 2027 and employ up to 4,000 people if the company can hit its goal of making and selling 200,000 vehicles per year.

Scout also wants to build by its plant a center where people could test drive vehicles on a company-owned track and take tours. For it to work, the company wants to be able to sell someone a vehicle after they zoom around the site, Thacker said.

South Carolina agreed in 2023 to give Scout more than $1 billion in incentives to land the plant. At the time, the dealership law wasn't on their radar. It came up as executives started looking at their business model, Thacker said.

The company doesn't regret choosing South Carolina and still believes it gave them the best workforce, economic climate and infrastructure. And it will move forward if the law isn't changed selling its vehicles through other states where it can get national licenses sending the money and tax benefits out of the state, Thacker said.



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NEW BLUETOOTH & WI-FI TECH TO RESHAPE THE WIRELESS INDUSTRY

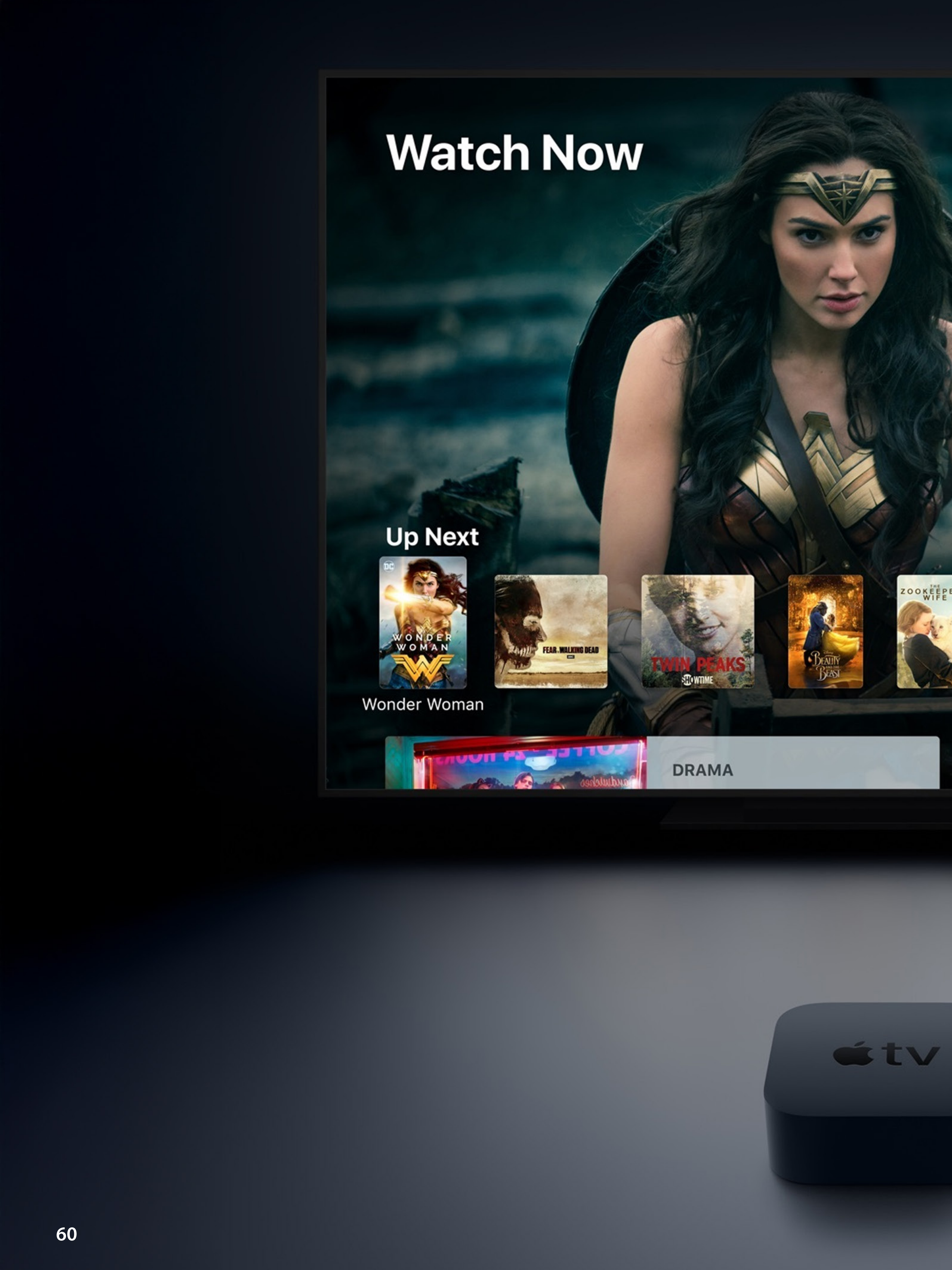
Apple has consistently pushed the envelope in terms of innovation, working to reduce its reliance on third-party suppliers while continuing to develop robust, energy-efficient devices. Up next could be a custom Bluetooth and Wi-Fi chip, codenamed "Proxima."

INTRODUCING PROXIMA

Apple's upcoming new chip promises to reshape the wireless technology landscape, with implications beyond the products it directly powers. With the debut of Proxima, Apple is setting a course to gradually eliminate its reliance on Broadcom, a longtime partner, and potentially set a new standard in the wireless industry. Bringing Wi-Fi and Bluetooth into a single integrated chip underscores Apple's strategy to create more efficient, powerful, and compact products. By designing custom chips, Apple hopes to improve energy efficiency and reduce its dependence on external suppliers, opening the door to greater control over its product roadmap.

Apple's pursuit of its own wireless chip technology is not a new development. The **company has long had its eyes set on reducing reliance on key players like Broadcom** and Qualcomm, both of which have supplied components for Apple devices for years. However, the launch of Proxima, an integrated Bluetooth and Wi-Fi chip, marks a significant milestone in Apple's strategy of building its own hardware. Proxima will initially appear in Apple products beginning in 2025, starting with the iPhone 17, **Apple TV, and HomePod mini.** The chip is expected to be incorporated into the iPad and Mac product lines by 2026. Apple aims to create an integrated wireless setup, combining Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, and potentially even 5G technology into one efficient, energy-saving component.

By handling more components in-house, Apple can fine-tune these chips to work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seamlessly with its software, creating more responsive, energy-efficient, and thin devices. This strategy also enables Apple to optimize power consumption across Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and cellular technologies, reducing the strain on battery life, a key concern for mobile devices.

For years, **Broadcom has been a critical supplier of Apple components,** providing essential hardware like Wi-Fi chips and Bluetooth modules. However, as Apple transitions towards Proxima, it will reduce its reliance on Broadcom in this domain. The move is part of Apple's broader strategy to streamline its supply chain and regain control over key technologies. Apple's decision to design its own Wi-Fi and Bluetooth chips reflects its increasing desire to break free from third-party dependencies.

Although Proxima will reduce Apple's reliance on Broadcom for Wi-Fi and Bluetooth chips, the two companies will not part ways entirely. Apple is still expected to use **Broadcom-designed radio frequency filters for modems.** Additionally, **Apple is working with Broadcom on future cloud server chips,** so the companies will continue to collaborate in some areas. Nonetheless, this shift represents a significant change in the relationship between Apple and Broadcom, with Apple now striving to develop chips that could compete with or surpass Broadcom's offerings.

PACKED WITH FEATURES

Not much is known about the specifics of Proxima's design, but early reports have provided a glimpse into the potential features of this new chip. Proxima is expected to support **Wi-Fi 7,** a faster, more efficient Wi-Fi standard offering improved speeds and reduced latency compared to previous generations. This is especially important as more devices enter the Internet of Things (IoT) ecosystem, requiring fast, stable connectivity. Bluetooth support is equally crucial. The new chip will likely integrate **Bluetooth 5.2,** which offers range, speed, and reliability improvements over previous versions. Bluetooth 5.2 also introduces enhanced audio features, such as improved support for wireless headphones and sound systems, complementing Apple's existing AirPods and Beats headphones.

Proxima's integration of Bluetooth and Wi-Fi into a single chip promises to streamline device design and improve overall power efficiency. Apple's design strategy likely centers on reducing the physical space needed for wireless components in devices, allowing for sleeker, thinner designs without compromising performance.

Proxima will likely debut in the iPhone 17, Apple TV, and HomePod mini in 2025, with plans for an eventual rollout across the iPad and Mac lines in 2026. For consumers, this means that Apple's next-generation products will be powered by a new, custom-designed chip that offers improved wireless performance. Wi-Fi 7 will provide faster, more reliable connections, while Bluetooth

9:41
Kitchen HomePod
Playing
Transfer from iPhone
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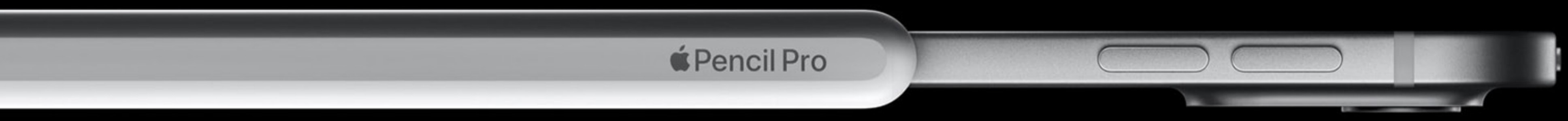
THINGS TAKE SHAPE
The Wave (feat. James Fauntleroy)
Amorphous & Brandy – Things Take
3:13
-1:04
Alarms

improvements will benefit AirPods and other Bluetooth-enabled accessories.

Proxima's integration into Apple's devices will also produce more power-efficient products. Apple has always prided itself on offering longer battery life, and Proxima will contribute to that goal by optimizing power usage for wireless communication. The chip's design also allows for thinner devices, meaning future iPhones, iPads,

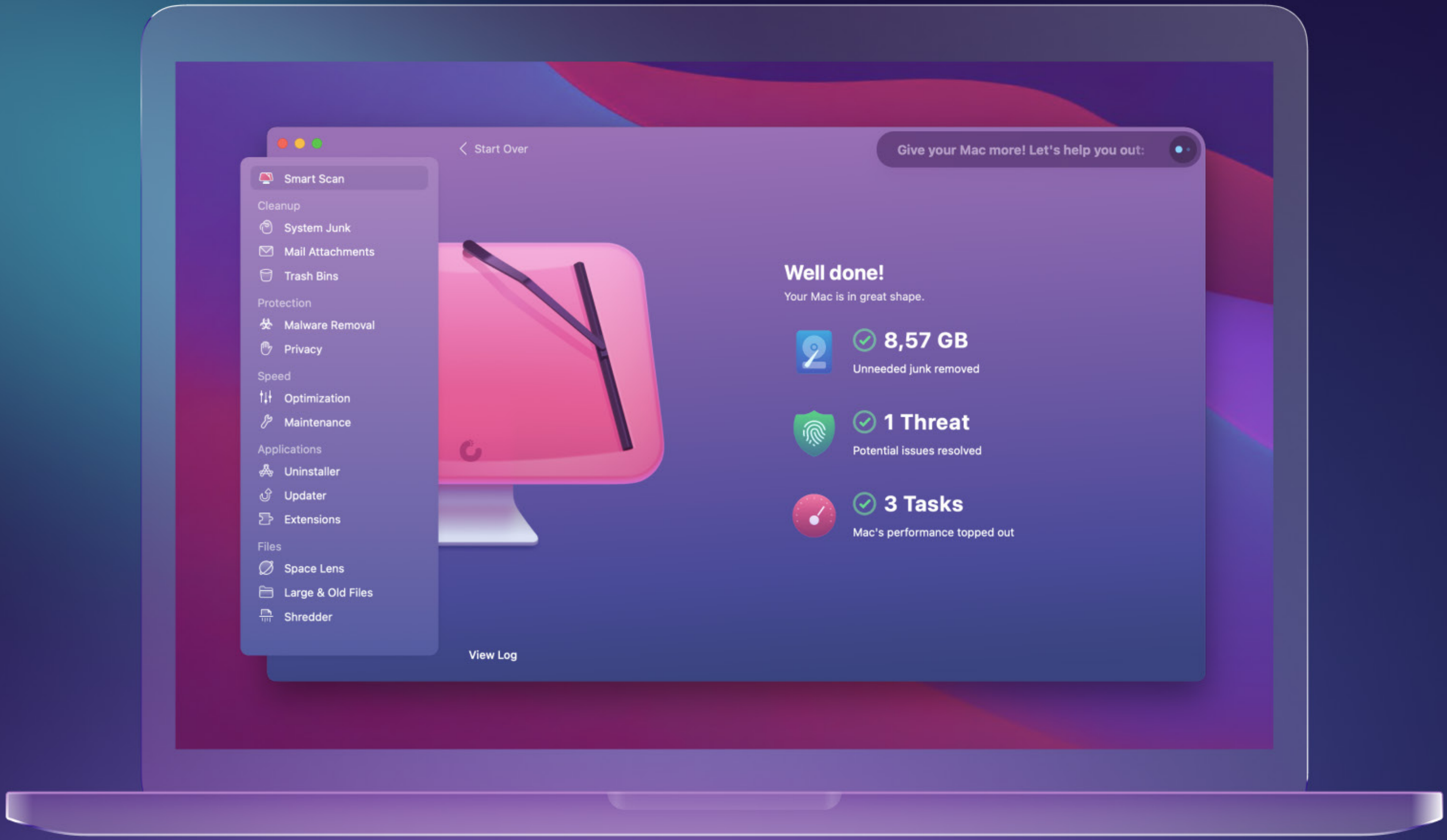
and Macs could be slimmer than current models. Apple's transition to its custom chips will also lead to enhanced features in its ecosystem. By developing its own Wi-Fi and Bluetooth components, Apple can better integrate these features into the software, enabling more seamless device interactions. The shift to Proxima could also lay the groundwork for new technologies, such as more powerful wearables or other connected devices.



APPLE'S WIRELESS FUTURE

Apple's development of Proxima is just the latest step in the company's ongoing efforts to reshape the technology industry. As the company continues to distance itself from third-party suppliers like Broadcom and Qualcomm, we can expect to see even more innovations in wireless technology and increased competition in the chip market. Proxima represents a bold new direction for Apple, and its integration into future products will likely redefine how consumers experience wireless connectivity. As Proxima rolls out in 2025, it will be interesting to see how this new technology compares to existing offerings in the market. If **Apple can match or exceed the performance of Broadcom and Qualcomm's chips,** Proxima could become the gold standard for wireless technology. In the years to come, the development of Proxima could pave the way for even more advancements in Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, and cellular technology, making Apple's wireless future more interconnected and efficient than ever.

Proxima is more than just a new chip for Apple. It is a pivotal step towards the company's broader goal of greater independence and innovation. As the wireless industry evolves, Apple's Proxima chip could be the key to the future of connectivity - and we can't wait!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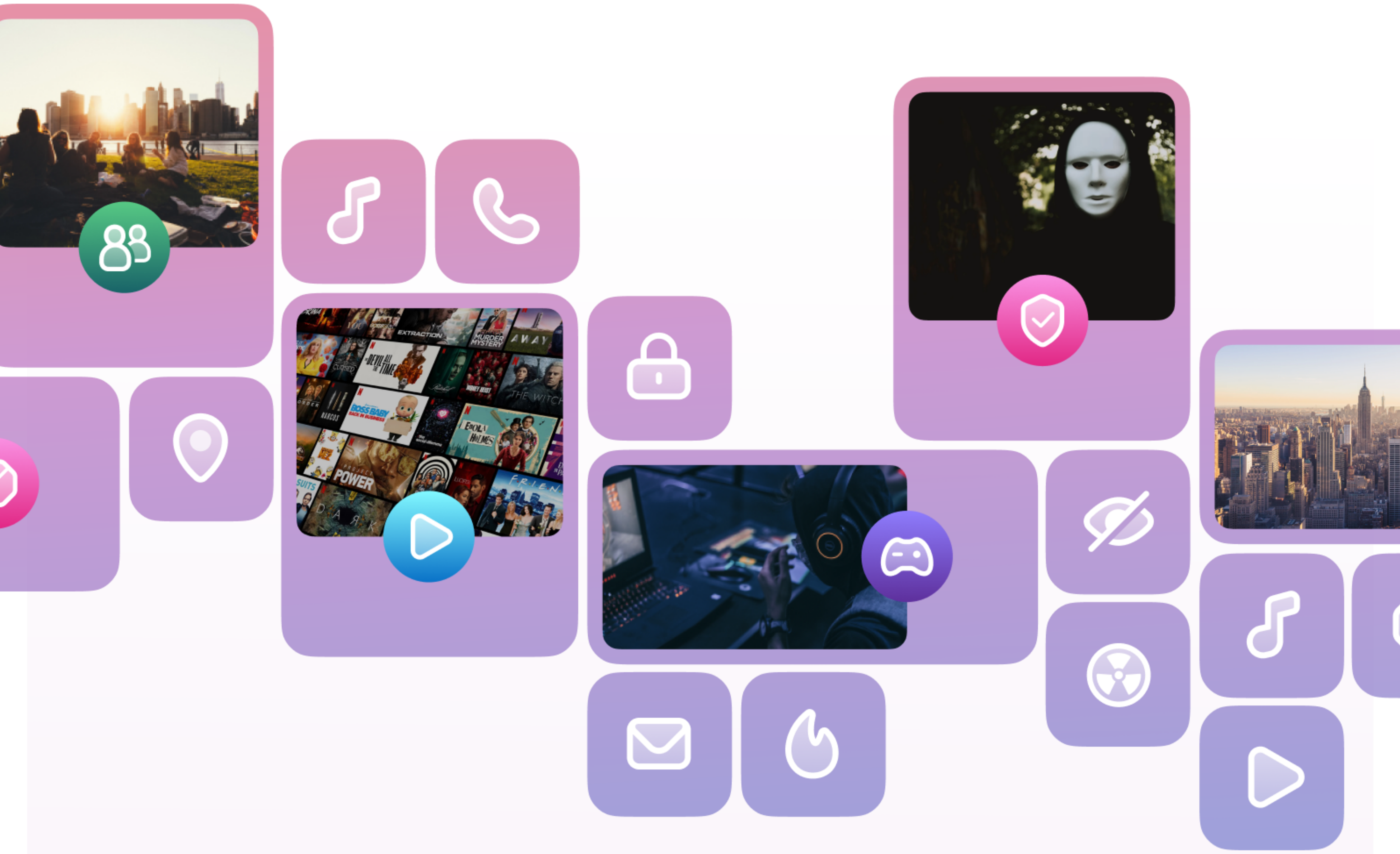

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MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO ROLE IN SEC SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT HACK THAT LED THE PRICE OF BITCOIN TO SPIKE

An Alabama man admitted to taking part in a January 2024 hack of a U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission social media account designed to manipulate the price of bitcoin.

Eric Council Jr., 25, pleaded guilty to an identity theft charge in U.S. District Court in Washington, court records show. His sentencing is set for May.

Council was arrested in October and charged with helping to break into the SEC's account on X, formerly known as Twitter, allowing unnamed co-conspirators to falsely announce the approval of long-awaited bitcoin exchange-traded funds, prosecutors said.

The price of bitcoin briefly spiked by more than $1,000 after the hacked account posted: "The SEC grants approval for #Bitcoin ETFs for listing on all registered national securities exchanges."

Soon after the initial post appeared, then-SEC Chairman Gary Gensler said on his personal account that the SEC's account was compromised. The price of bitcoin swung from about $46,730 to just below $48,000 after the unauthorized post hit on Jan. 9 and then dropped to around $45,200 after the SEC's denial. The SEC officially approved the first exchange-traded funds that hold bitcoin the following day. Bitcoin has recently been trading around $100,000.

Council carried out what's known as a "SIM swap," using a fake ID to impersonate someone with access to the SEC's X account and convince a cellphone store to give him a SIM card linked to the person's phone, prosecutors said. Council

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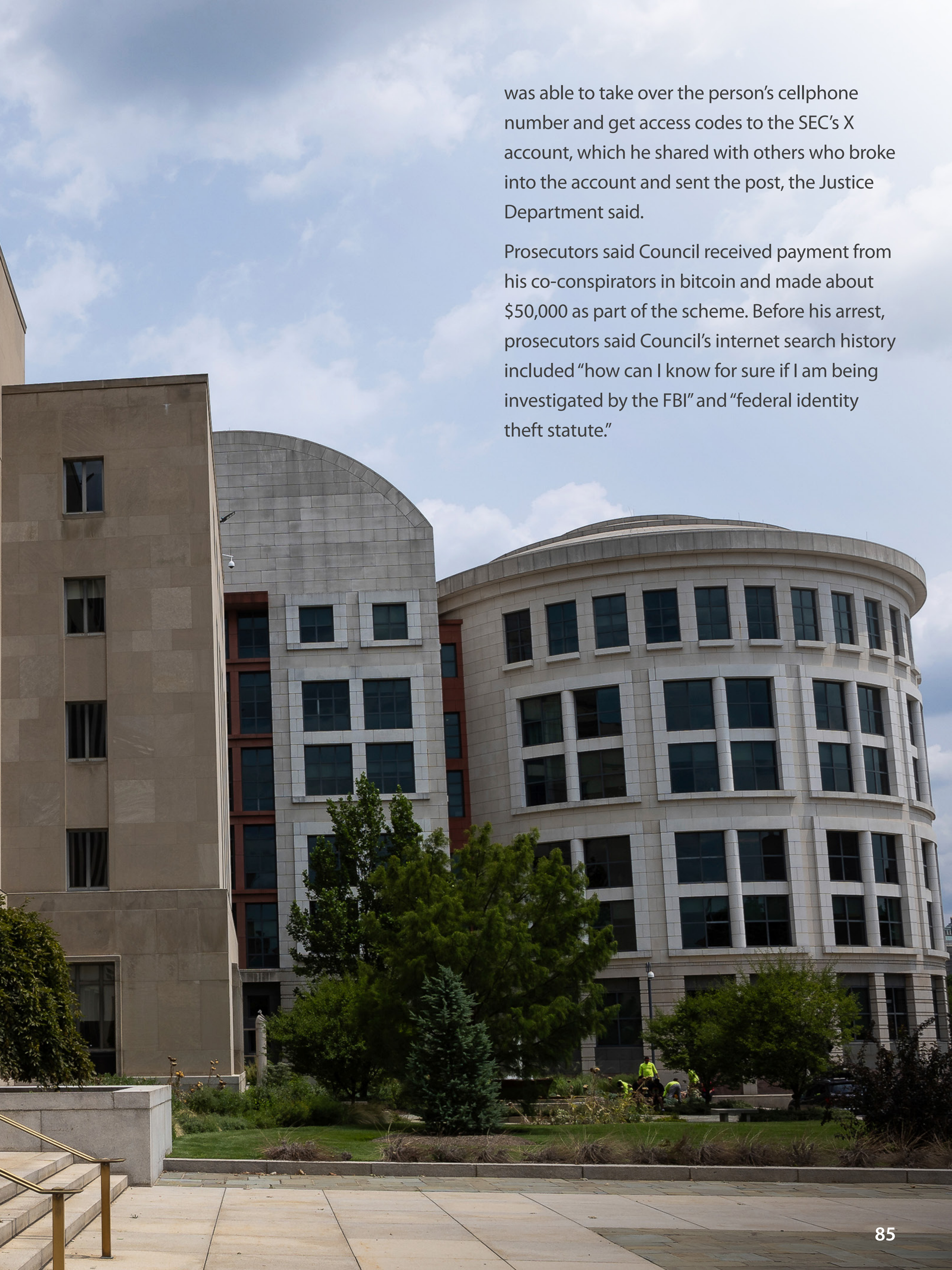
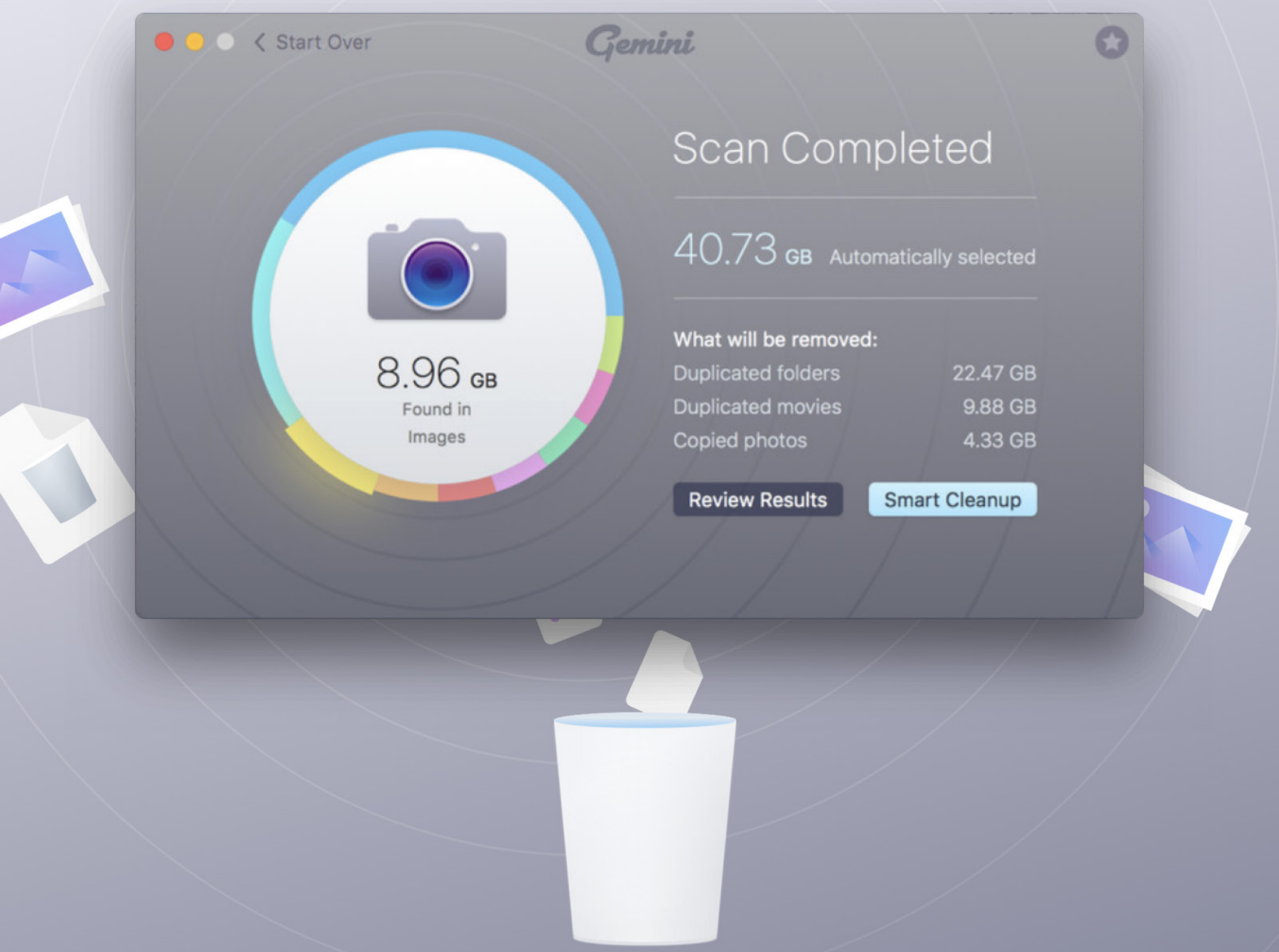


was able to take over the person's cellphone number and get access codes to the SEC's X account, which he shared with others who broke into the account and sent the post, the Justice Department said.

Prosecutors said Council received payment from his co-conspirators in bitcoin and made about $50,000 as part of the scheme. Before his arrest, prosecutors said Council's internet search history included "how can I know for sure if I am being investigated by the FBI" and "federal identity theft statute."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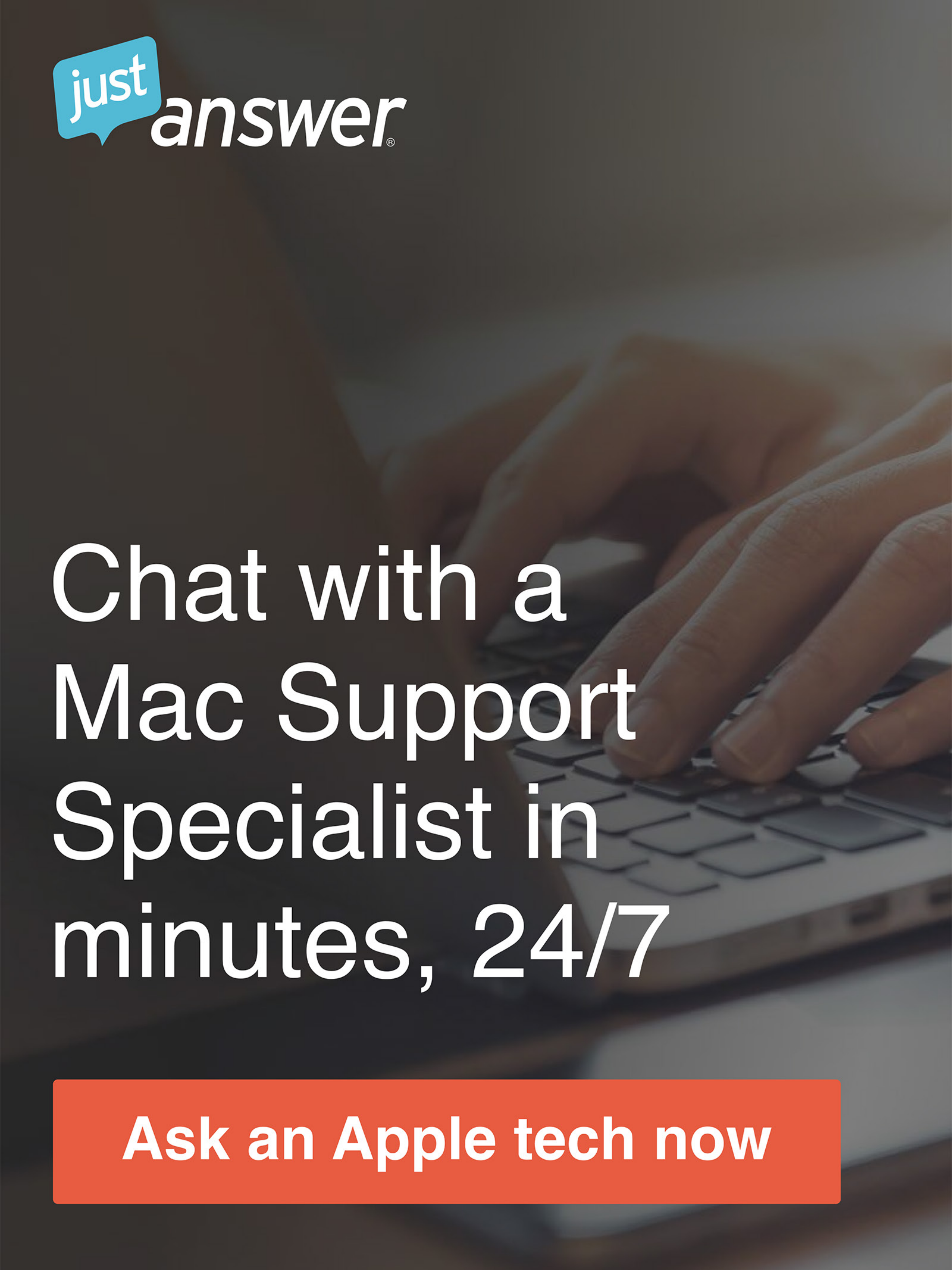

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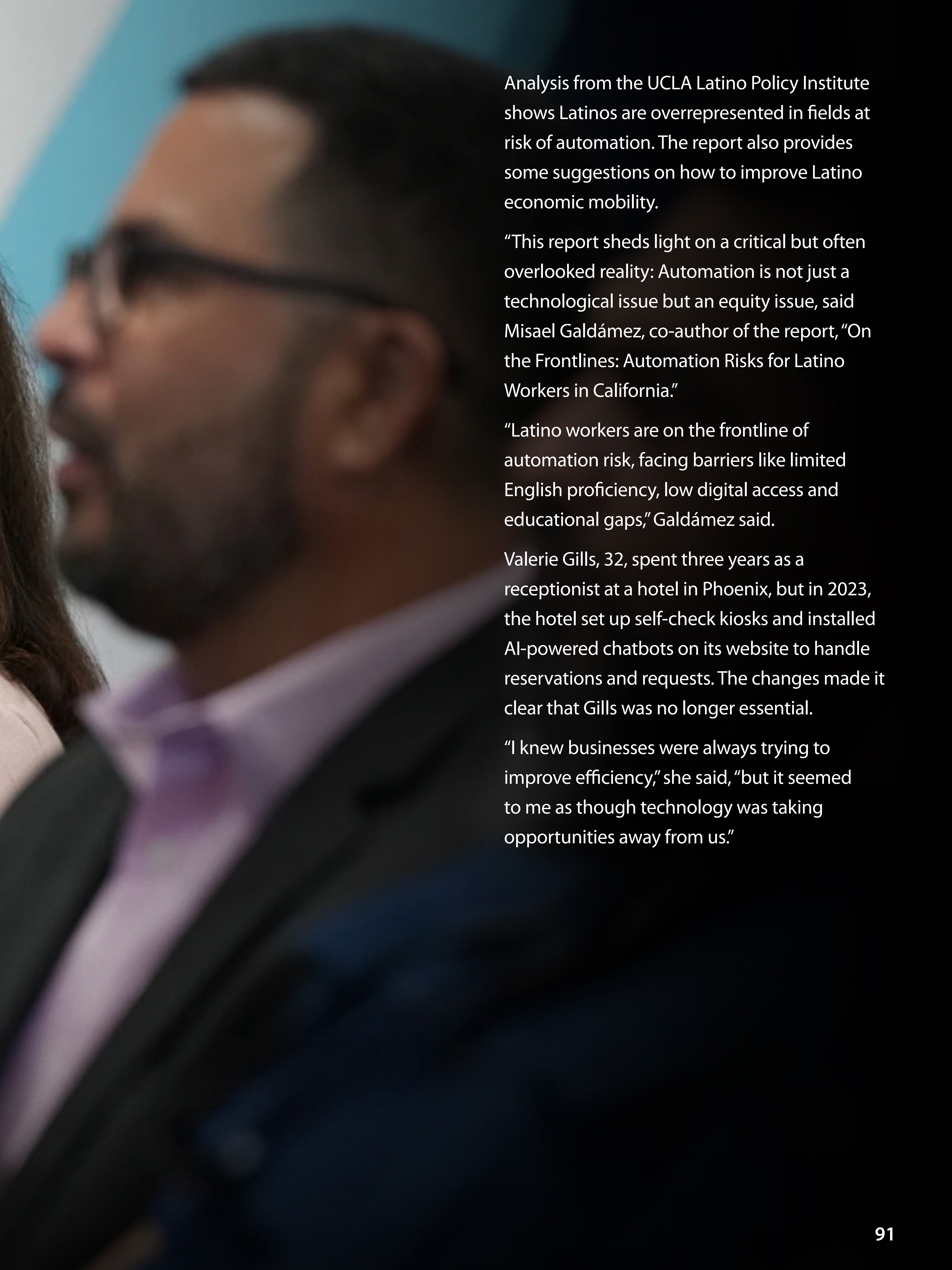
Image: Lynne Sladky

LATINO WORKERS WORKING TO OVERCOME A TECHNOLOGICAL DIVIDE BROUGHT ON BY AUTOMATION AND AI

As jobs become more reliant on technology some Latino workers can be left behind due to a lack of digital skills exacerbated by a lack of accessibility.

Latinos remain an integral part of jobs in agriculture, construction, retail and food services but these jobs are also at risk of automation, leaving some Latinos unprepared for a changing role that relies more on technology, according to a new report by researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Image: Lynne Sladky



Analysis from the UCLA Latino Policy Institute shows Latinos are overrepresented in fields at risk of automation. The report also provides some suggestions on how to improve Latino economic mobility.

“This report sheds light on a critical but often overlooked reality: Automation is not just a technological issue but an equity issue, said Misael Galdámez, co-author of the report, “On the Frontlines: Automation Risks for Latino Workers in California.”

“Latino workers are on the frontline of automation risk, facing barriers like limited English proficiency, low digital access and educational gaps,” Galdámez said.

Valerie Gills, 32, spent three years as a receptionist at a hotel in Phoenix, but in 2023, the hotel set up self-check kiosks and installed AI-powered chatbots on its website to handle reservations and requests. The changes made it clear that Gills was no longer essential.

“I knew businesses were always trying to improve efficiency,” she said, “but it seemed to me as though technology was taking opportunities away from us.”

Image: Lynne Sladky

Gills eventually lost her job. She found temporary positions but nothing as stable as her hotel job had been. Her employment troubles weighed on her mental health and "reminded me how weak workers like me can be when industries get everything automated."

Ramiro Cavazos, president and CEO of the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, said that while automation displaces those with limited skills, it can also create new roles, provide better working conditions and prevent burnout.

"Automation affects people that don't have access to the Internet," Cavazos said. "Latinos, who traditionally are the ones impacted, have made great progress as we become more educated, more skilled."

As Gills looked for a new job, the reality set in: She would need to learn a new skill to stay ahead of the curve. Ultimately she was able to get an internship as a blog editor, but she is actively looking for a tech-study program in data analytics and software development, including boot camps online, so she can be a competitive candidate.

Cavazos said the Hispanic Chamber works with over 500 foundations to ensure corporations contribute to providing skills training that Latinos need to compete in the current job market. He has seen a lot of investment to ensure Latino workers have the skills they need to succeed.

During former President Joe Biden's administration, the U.S. Department of Labor's division on employment and training focused on providing Latinos a pathway to learn new skills through apprenticeship programs, said Manny Lamre, then deputy assistant secretary for employment and training. According to Lamare, the apprenticeships were perfect for Latinos as they met their needs to have high-paying, family-supporting careers.

“We do think it’s really important to continue to engage individuals and meet them where they are,” Lamarre said at the time. “Quite frankly the Biden-Harris Administration has been intentional about making investments supporting Latino and Hispanic communities. We are hopeful those investments continue.”

Department of Labor officials under President Donald Trump, who has issued several orders targeting diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI, did not immediately confirm whether the apprenticeship programs are still active.

Carlos Vasquez, founder of Miami Ed Tech, a nonprofit focused on providing skills Latino students need for upward mobility, said apprenticeships are extremely favorable to Latinos as they are paying jobs from day one with a promise of training from an organization.

Miami Ed Tech offers two apprenticeships in AI, data science and web design.

“Everyone thinks it’s only for like, the trades,” Vazquez said. “But that was the other thing that the Biden administration really pushed, is building more apprenticeships in nontraditional and emerging sectors. So we are kind of like, trying to also emulate that by offering in our community any employer who doesn’t know but wants to get involved, because there’s a lot of benefits. So it’s a win-win for everyone.”

LATINO DIGITAL ACCELERATOR
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Image: Lynne Sladky

SUCCESS IN TEC
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Image: Lynne Sladky

Historically, Latinos have always been impacted by automation due to their relation to labor-intensive roles, especially in retail and food service. Cavazos said it is crucial to "teach Latinos more digital skills to evolve with the workforce."

A study by UCLA this year found that in California, 2.3 million Latinos are employed in roles most at risk of becoming automated. Of the Latinos working in automation, 21% of them do not have access to high-speed internet at home, a hindrance to digital upskilling, the study found. A 2021 Pew Research study also found that only 67% of Hispanic adults reported owning a desktop or laptop computer, compared with 8 in 10 white adults.

Diana Caba, vice president for community and economic development at the Hispanic Federation, said that as the world becomes more digital, it can become a huge obstacle for Latinos who do not have digital skills. Therefore the nonprofit has partnered with over 50 community-based organizations to decrease the digital divide by providing Latinos training, including access to technology.

Caba said that of the 35,000 people they've trained, 70% have completed the training. She said 6,000 have gone on to new jobs, and about 10,500 have gotten a six-figure salary.

"Automation is a big threat for our community, considering that we are in these low-paying sectors that are actually very vulnerable and don't really offer much opportunities for economic mobility," Caba said. "It's been really exciting to take this approach and meet the needs of increasing the digital acumen of the Latino community."

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Dylan Pravia started as an intern with Miami Ed Tech, which he said provided him the opportunity to use computers and learn about AI and programming. He is now able to use what he learned there as a mechanical engineering student at Florida International University.

“I really like what Miami Ed Tech is doing,” Pravia said. “They are providing that training, that opportunity, to students. Talent is everywhere, and we should give (Latino) students as much training as they can, all those opportunities, so we can see the talent and their skills in the world.”

Gills, the former hotel receptionist, said she understands technology is the future but automation feels like a double-edged sword. While it can open opportunities for high-skilled labor, it also diminishes the number of low-skill jobs that many Latinos need, she said.

“I’ve seen firsthand how many co-workers were swapped for kiosks or chatbots,” Gills said. “Retraining workers and preparing them for new jobs needs to be better supported by the system. To be honest, these times with automation and AI feel very unreliable and constantly changing, but I guess we just have to learn how to adapt.”

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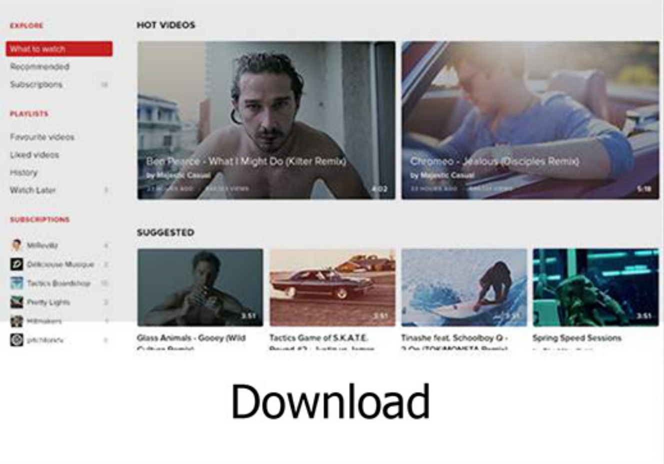
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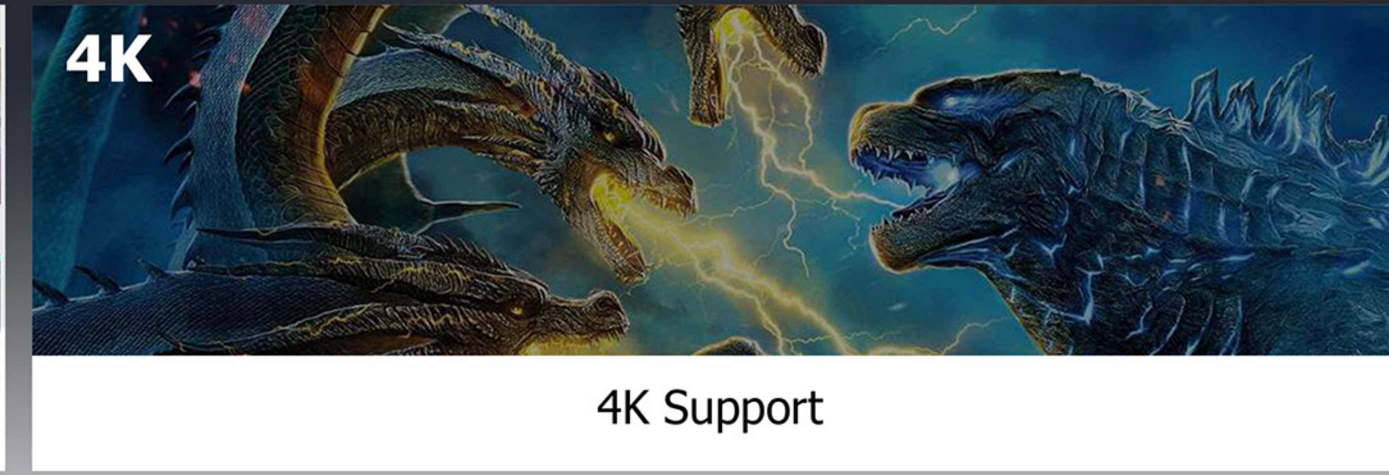
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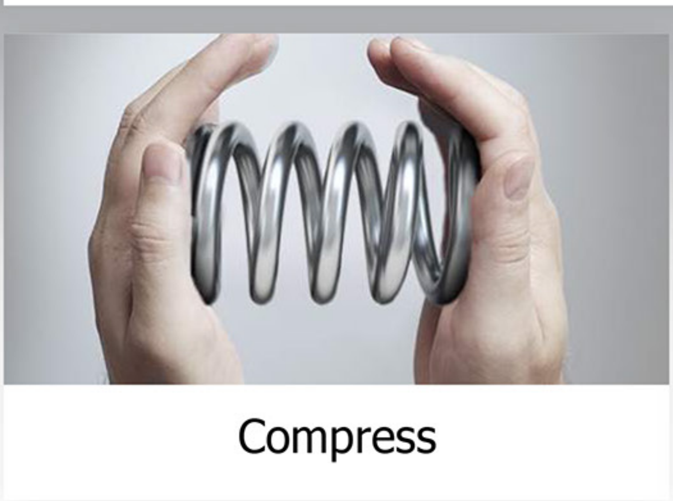

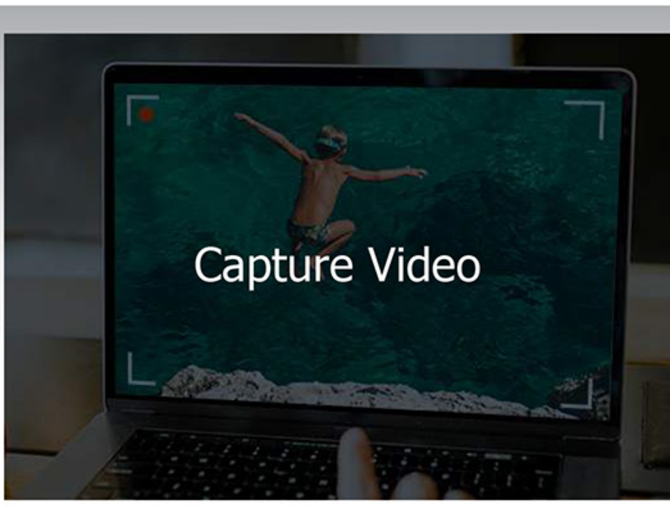
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CALIFORNIA'S INSURER FOR PEOPLE WITHOUT PRIVATE COVERAGE NEEDS $1 BILLION MORE FOR LA FIRES CLAIMS

California's plan that provides insurance to homeowners who can't get private coverage needs $1 billion more to pay out claims related to the Los Angeles wildfires, the state Insurance Department said this week.

The FAIR Plan is an insurance pool that all the major private insurers pay into, and the plan then issues policies to people who can't get private insurance because their properties are deemed too risky to insure. The plan, with high premiums and basic coverage, is designed as a temporary option until homeowners can find permanent coverage, but more Californians are relying on it than ever. There were more than 452,000 policies on the Fair Plan in 2024, more than double the number in 2020.

The plan says it's expecting a loss of roughly $4 billion from the Eaton and Palisades Fires, which sparked Jan. 7, destroyed nearly 17,000 structures and killed at least 29 people. Roughly 4,700 claims have been filed as of this week, and the plan has already paid out more than $914 million.

Under a FAIR Plan request approved by the state Tuesday, all insurers doing business in California will have to bear half the cost and can pass on the rest to all policyholders in the form of a one-time fee. Insurers can collect that cost in the next two years. The state Insurance Department must approve those costs.

State officials didn't immediately have details on how large the fee would be. In approving the request, the state allowed the plan to send out notices and collect funding from marketplace insurers within 30 days.

It's the first time the Fair Plan has sought approval for additional money in more than 30 years, the department said.

"I took this necessary consumer protection action with one goal in mind: the FAIR Plan must pay claims just like any other insurance company," Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara said in a statement.

"I reject those who are hoping for the failure of our insurance market by spreading fear and doubt," Lara said. "Wildfire survivors can't cash 'what ifs' to pay for food and rent, but they can cash FAIR Plan checks."

The plan also expects to receive $1.45 billion in reinsurance to help pay out claims. It anticipates it will have roughly $400 million left by July.

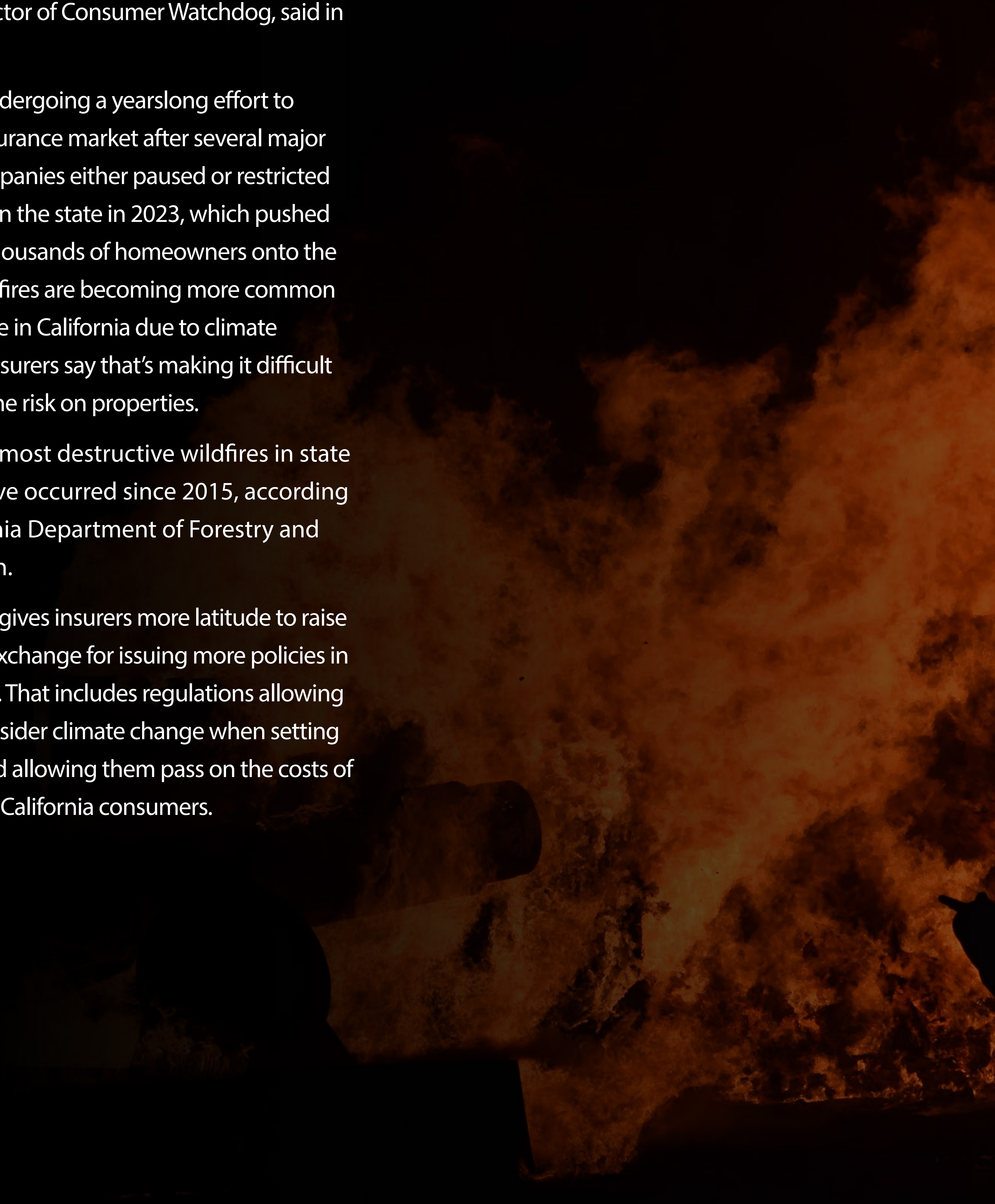
According to the plan, 45% of the wildfire claims filed so far are reported as total losses, 45% as partial losses and 10% as fair rental value.

Insurers on Tuesday said they're committed to helping the recovery process after the fires and that the ability to recoup some of the cost from ratepayers will prevent companies from leaving the state.

"This is essential to prevent even greater strain on California's already unbalanced insurance market and avoiding widespread policy cancellations that would jeopardize coverage for millions of Californians," said Mark Sektnan of the American Property Casualty Insurance Association, the largest national trade association for home, auto and business insurers.

But a consumer watchdog group, which opposed a rule that allows insurers to pass off costs to policyholders, said it will challenge the effort.

"Consumer Watchdog is exploring every legal option to stop a bailout if any insurance company seeks to make consumers pay," Carmen Balber,

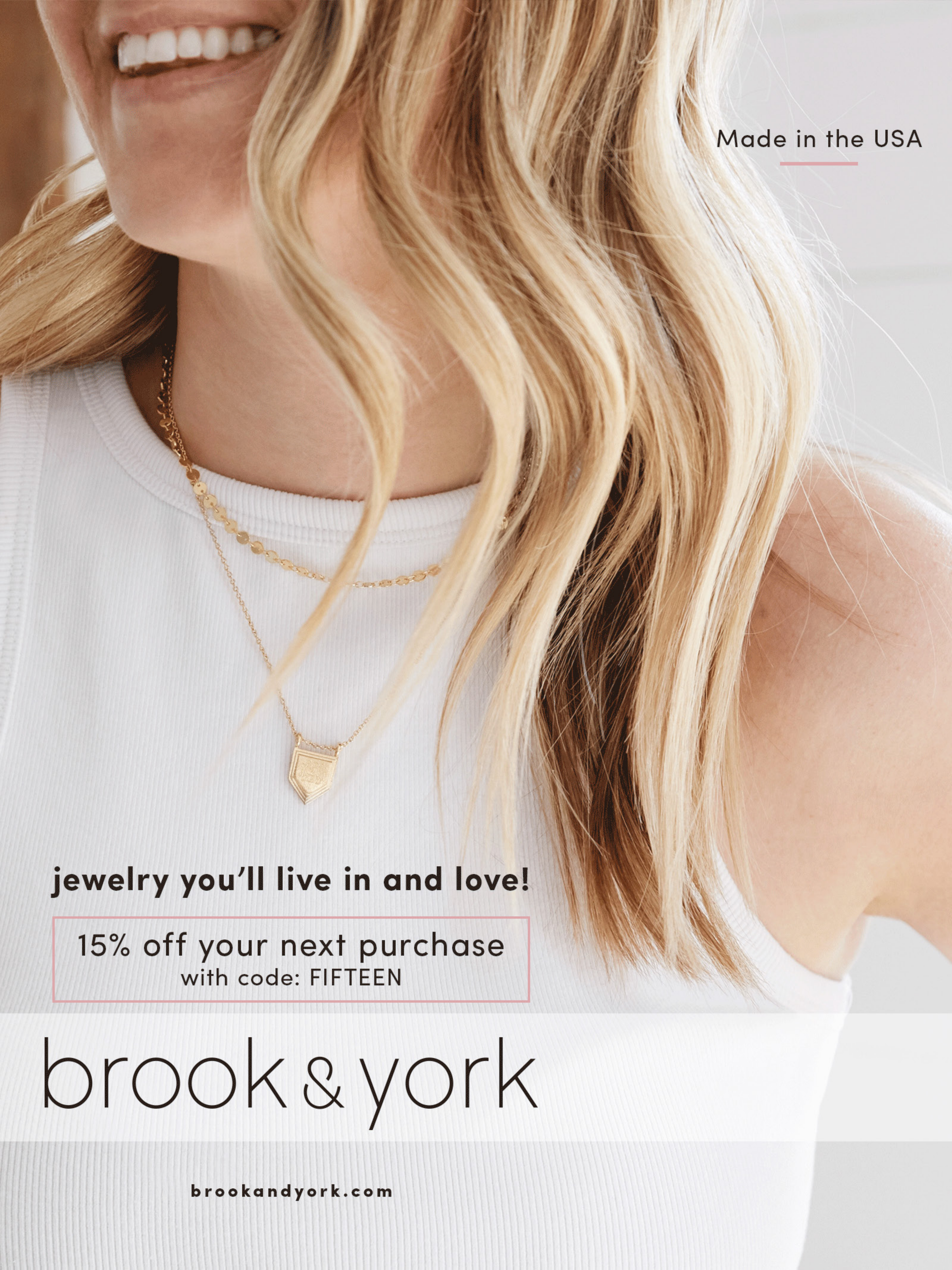


executive director of Consumer Watchdog, said in a statement.

California is undergoing a yearslong effort to stabilize its insurance market after several major insurance companies either paused or restricted new business in the state in 2023, which pushed hundreds of thousands of homeowners onto the FAIR Plan. Wildfires are becoming more common and destructive in California due to climate change, and insurers say that’s making it difficult to truly price the risk on properties.

Of the top 20 most destructive wildfires in state history, 15 have occurred since 2015, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

The state now gives insurers more latitude to raise premiums in exchange for issuing more policies in high-risk areas. That includes regulations allowing insurers to consider climate change when setting their prices and allowing them pass on the costs of reinsurance to California consumers.



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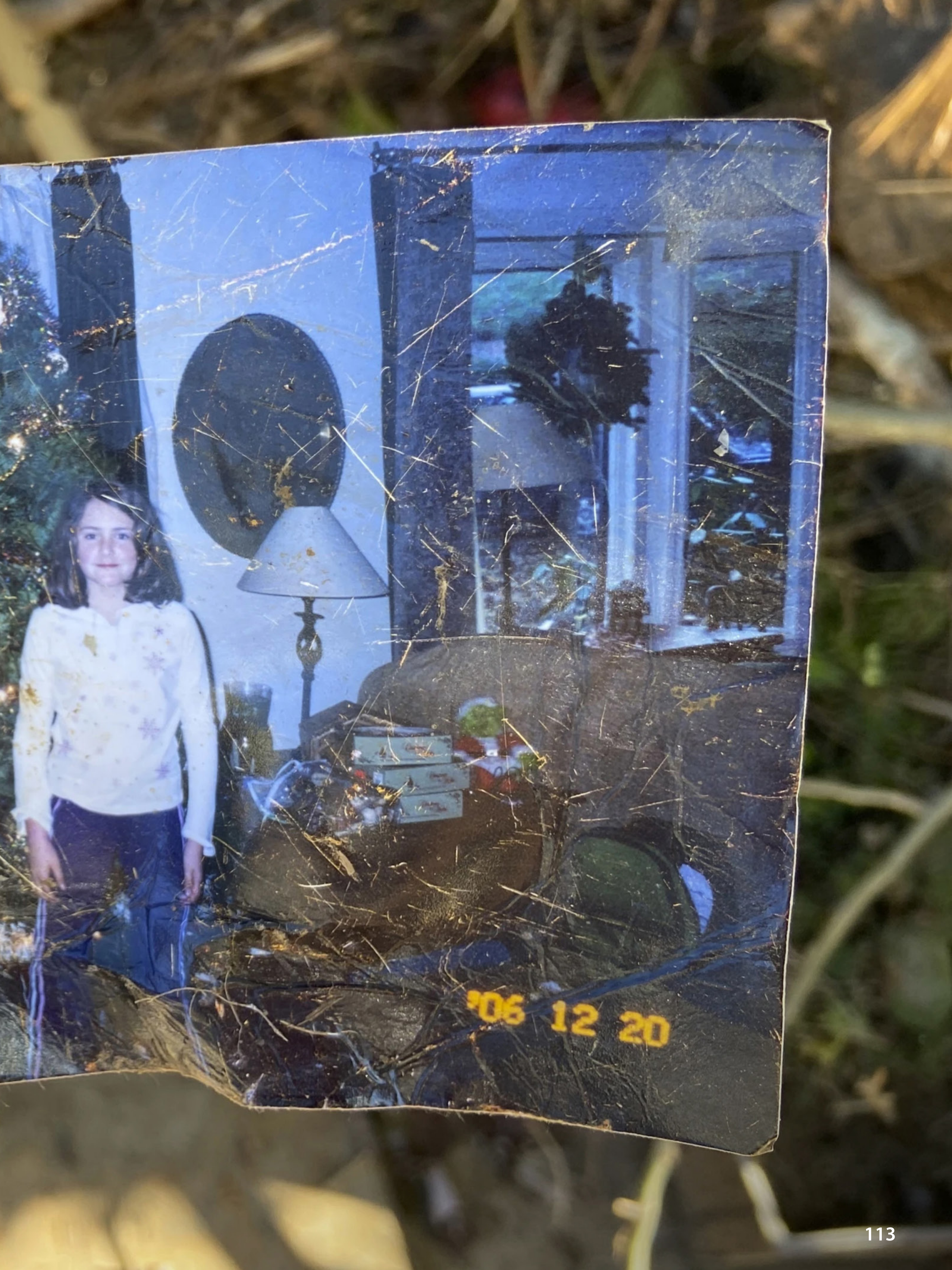
HOW PHOTOS LOST IN AMERICAN DISASTERS FIND THEIR WAY HOME, WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM PEOPLE WHO CARE

Hollowed-out homes. Cars entombed by mud. Unpeopled roads. Belongings reduced to dirt and debris.

It all took a toll on Taylor Schenker.

After Hurricane Helene last September, Schenker was upset by the deluge of images of Asheville, North Carolina. "This storm has taken so much," she said, "and it's so jarring to see the photos of the horrible devastation." So less than a week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after the storm, she set out to do something about the wide-scale loss.

While helping a friend search for belongings cast downriver, she stumbled on a handful of photos of strangers — mud-caked, curled up in tree branches and stuck under river rocks. The images captured family reunions, newborn babies, weddings, birthday parties, beloved pets and school portraits.

“These tiny photos had been through so much and miraculously had washed up and were in decent enough condition that you could see what they were,” said Schenker, 27. “It stuck with me.”

To reclaim the search phrase “photos from Helene,” she created an Instagram for “something positive, which is reuniting people with their memories.” She set up a post-office box, linked up with a volunteer search and rescue crew, and ultimately uncovered more than 500 photos — or what she calls “little needles in a haystack.”

When Schenker made her first match, she got chills.

Then, sitting in her car, she cried.

SOMETHING FRAGILE, RE-EMERGING FROM THE MUCK

We hold onto photos to keep memories alive — of people, places and moments that might otherwise fade. Or sometimes are ripped away abruptly.

Schenker has since returned more than 70 such images. A stack of them were hand-delivered to Mary Moss, whose car was destroyed by

Duchess
Honey Bun
12 packs

an uprooted tree as she and her husband evacuated the Asheville home where they had lived for almost 40 years.

“It was really kind of overwhelming at first when she handed me those pictures. I just couldn’t even speak,” Moss said. “You don’t expect something as fragile as photos to be retrieved.”

Months later, they’ve received some FEMA assistance and found a temporary home, which they’re gradually furnishing with church donations. But some things are irreplaceable.

“This is not really about losing the home and all the material stuff in there. But what’s been devastating is that that was everything we had of Tommy,” she said, of their son who died at age 12 from a genetic disorder. “It’s those memories and the little things, the photos, that you can’t replace.”

As Schenker later understood it, “When they lost their home, they lost virtually all proof that this child existed.”

“It is such a privilege to look into the intimate moments of people’s lives,” she said. “They’ve literally lost everything and they can’t ever recreate those childhood photos.”

In photos Schenker found nearly 3 miles (5 km) from the Moss’ family home, Tommy is seen as a 2-year-old, dressed like an angel for a Christmas pageant. In another, he is wearing a toddler-sized suit; in yet another, he’s playing at daycare alongside his younger brother Dallas.

“It is just breathtaking,” Moss said. “This is one thing that the river didn’t get to take — or didn’t get to keep.”

LOST IMAGES EMERGED FROM THE CALIFORNIA FIRES, TOO

More than 2,000 miles (3,200 km) away, in the Altadena foothills of Los Angeles, Claire Schwartz, 31, began to collect photos with a similar idea: Find images, post them online, try to unite them with their owners.

After the Eaton fire, but before the first rain, she panicked. When rain and ash mix, it makes lye, which destroys photos. "Someone has to do this ASAP," she remembers thinking to herself. "And I realized it had to be me — because nobody else was doing it."

Luca Ackerman, a New York-based photo conservator, cautions that mold can start to develop 48 hours after water exposure. To slow the deterioration process, he freezes such prints — and advised to not wipe off any surfaces, which can drag toxic oils across the print, "driving particles deeper into the material." Some photos are so brittle, too, that when touched they may disintegrate.

In the wake of disasters, conservators like Ackerman are deployed in volunteer rotations with the National Heritage Responders. Rapidly, he trains art handlers and museum staff how to treat sensitive materials, whether they are damaged by smoke, water, ash or soot.

Wearing a respirator, nitrile gloves and booties, Schwartz swiftly set out to salvage photos — finding them alongside pages from yearbooks, sheet music, and children's art in nearby parks, neighbors' front yards and a golf course.

"The wind has scattered everything, everywhere. And trash is mixed in with precious mementos,

everywhere you look," she said. "It's just absolutely bizarre how stuff clumps together and travels as a unit."

FINDING THE PEOPLE BEHIND WAYWARD PHOTOGRAPHS

Normally, a local library would take in found items, but the Altadena Public Library, along with more than 9,000 homes, burned to the ground. Librarians are redirecting residents who have found photos to Schwartz.

She adopted parts of her process from what she learned as an archival intern at the Corita Art Center — protecting photos in acid-free, glassine envelopes and storing them in a waterproof box in a temperature-controlled room with good air circulation.

Last week, she made her first match: disposable camera photos of teenagers, smiling, in prom dresses and glittering tiaras. The image is flecked with damage, but all four corners are intact.

"It's funny — you formulate these ideas of who the person is," Schwartz said. "She was kind of exactly what I pictured, just really friendly and bubbly and lovely — you could tell that just from her photos."

Schwartz's house survived because her neighbors stayed behind to fight the fire themselves, but the landscape around it — full of burned-out lots, ghostly palm trees and blackened telephone poles — is otherworldly and changed. "It looks like the moon. It looks like another planet. It doesn't look like home."

Nearby is Joshua Simpson, a photographer who lost his Altadena home and studio, along

with decades of film negatives, silver gelatin prints and camera equipment. But something meaningful survived.

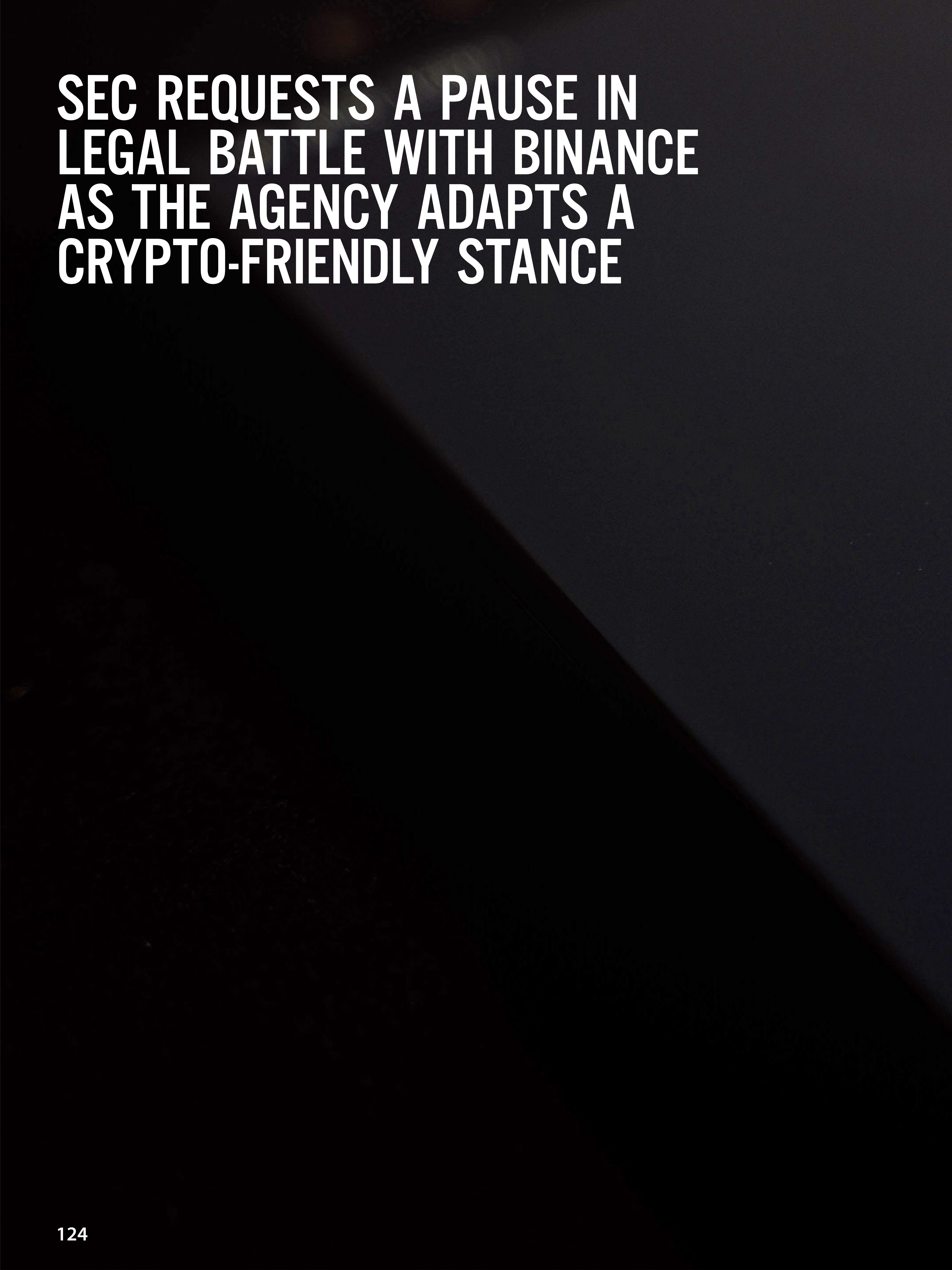
“The very first thing we found was this beautiful vintage print of my mother-in-law holding my wife when she was a newborn baby.” The black-and-white photo carries an extra layer of poignancy, as his mother-in-law died just few months ago. “We were both pretty overjoyed in that moment. It felt a little magical finding that one.”

Above all else, Ackerman said, personal safety comes first. “When you’re picking up people’s heirlooms or family photographs, that can be traumatic — even if they’re not yours,” he said.

When people survive catastrophic events such as wildfires or hurricanes, and then are left to cope with loss, they may express a wide range of emotions — from overwhelmed to outraged to numb, sometimes all at once. Tragedies, though, can also strengthen the ties in communities, and people like Schenker and Schwartz are Exhibits A and B.

“Disasters like this really bring out the best in people,” Moss said. “You know, I can laugh or I can cry about it — and I choose to laugh about it. Fortunately, we didn’t lose the most important thing. That’s lives.”

SEC REQUESTS A PAUSE IN LEGAL BATTLE WITH BINANCE AS THE AGENCY ADAPTS A CRYPTO-FRIENDLY STANCE



BINANCE

U. S.
SECURITIES
AND
EXCHANGE
COMMISSION

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission is seeking to pause its high-profile lawsuit against the cryptocurrency exchange Binance as the regulator tries to present itself as more crypto-friendly under a new administration.

Binance and the SEC filed a joint motion Monday asking for a 60-day stay in a lawsuit the regulator filed with significant fanfare two years ago under its previous chairman, Gary Gensler.

Monday's filing in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia said the SEC approached Binance asking for the pause. The regulator said the work of a new crypto task force launched by Acting Chairman Mark Uyeda that's supposed to improve ties to the crypto industry "may impact and facilitate the potential resolution of this case."

The filing is the first "tangible action in existing enforcement actions that recognizes a change in direction of the agency," said Carol Goforth, a distinguished professor at the University of Arkansas School of Law.

Binance is the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange – a digital marketplace where customers can buy, sell and store different types of crypto -- and the SEC's lawsuit drew considerable attention when first filed.

Gensler said in a statement at the time that Binance and its founder, Changpeng Zhao, had engaged in an extensive "web of deception" while the SEC's X account posted a graphic highlighting a key piece of evidence of alleged wrongdoing: a quote from Binance's chief compliance officer saying to another employee in 2018, "We are operating as a fking unlicensed securities exchange in the USA bro."

In a separate case, Binance later agreed to pay a roughly $4 billion settlement and Zhao pleaded guilty to a felony related to his failure to prevent money laundering on the platform.

A key issue facing the cryptocurrency industry is whether certain digital assets should be regulated as securities – a position that the SEC under Gensler supported while many in the crypto industry are opposed.

Cryptocurrencies are a kind of electronic cash that have moved from the financial fringes to the mainstream in rapid fits and starts, despite being marred by scandals and market meltdowns.

The SEC has targeted crypto exchanges like Binance, Coinbase and others for allegedly operating unregistered securities exchanges. That scrutiny came after the high-profile meltdown of FTX, the exchange founded by disgraced crypto mogul Sam Bankman-Fried.

The industry said it was unfairly treated by the Biden administration, and Gensler in particular, and spent heavily to help Trump and Republicans in the last election. Trump and GOP lawmakers have signaled their eagerness to help the crypto industry with friendly legislation and light-touch regulations.

Uyeda launched the new crypto task force last month, saying the agency needed a reset in its approach to crypto.

“To date, the SEC has relied primarily on enforcement actions to regulate crypto retroactively and reactively, often adopting novel and untested legal interpretations along the way,” the agency said in announcing the task

E. BARRETT PRETTYMAN
UNITED STATES COURT HOUSE

INVESTMENT
COMPANY

force. “Clarity regarding who must register, and practical solutions for those seeking to register, have been elusive.”

Legal experts said the pause in the Binance case could indicate similar changes in the SEC’s ongoing legal action against other crypto exchanges.

“I would expect that all of these cases will be either dismissed outright or settled on very favorable terms to the defendants,” said James Murphy, a securities law expert.

That’s bad news, said Corey Frayer, a former SEC official who recently left the agency.

“The SEC delaying what appears to be a slam dunk case in Binance while welcoming crypto’s return to its pre-FTX days is a bad omen for any other ongoing crypto litigation,” he said.

In a statement, Binance said the SEC’s case “has always been without merit” and praised Uyeda for “his thoughtful approach to ensuring digital assets receive the appropriate legislative and regulatory focus in this new, golden era of blockchain in the U.S. and around the world.”

CREW FLIGHT TEST
STARLINER
BOEING NASA
WILMORE WILLIAMS
SUNI WILLIAMS
NASA
BUTCH WILMORE
NASA

NASA'S 2 STUCK ASTRONAUTS MAY RETURN TO EARTH SOONER UNDER NEW PLAN

CST-100
STARLINER
BOEING

NASA's two stuck astronauts may end up back on Earth a little sooner than planned.

The space agency announced Tuesday that SpaceX will switch capsules for upcoming astronaut flights in order to bring Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams home in mid-March instead of late March or April. That will shave at least a couple weeks off their prolonged stay at the International Space Station, which hit the eight-month mark last week.

"Human spaceflight is full of unexpected challenges," NASA's commercial crew program manager Steve Stich said in a statement.

The test pilots should have returned in June on Boeing's Starliner capsule after what should have been a weeklong flight demo. But the capsule had so much trouble getting to the space station that NASA decided to bring it back empty and reassigned the pair to SpaceX.

Then SpaceX delayed the launch of their replacements on a brand new capsule that needed more prepping, which added more time to Wilmore and Williams' mission.

With even more work still anticipated for the new capsule, NASA opted for its next crew to fly up on an older capsule, with liftoff now targeted for March 12. This older capsule had already been assigned to a private crew awaiting launch this spring.

The private flight arranged by the Houston company Axiom Space, featuring astronauts from Poland, Hungary and India, was bumped and will launch later to the space station, possibly still this spring.

OVHD
EXIT
DECK
NOD 1

NASA prefers having a new crew arrive before sending the old one back, in this case Wilmore, Williams and two others up there since September. The new crew going up includes two NASA astronauts, as well as one from Japan and one from Russia.

NASA's latest change in plans comes two weeks after the space agency said it was working "expeditiously" to bring back Wilmore and Williams as soon as possible. Just a day earlier, President Donald Trump and SpaceX's Elon Musk had vowed to accelerate the astronauts' return.

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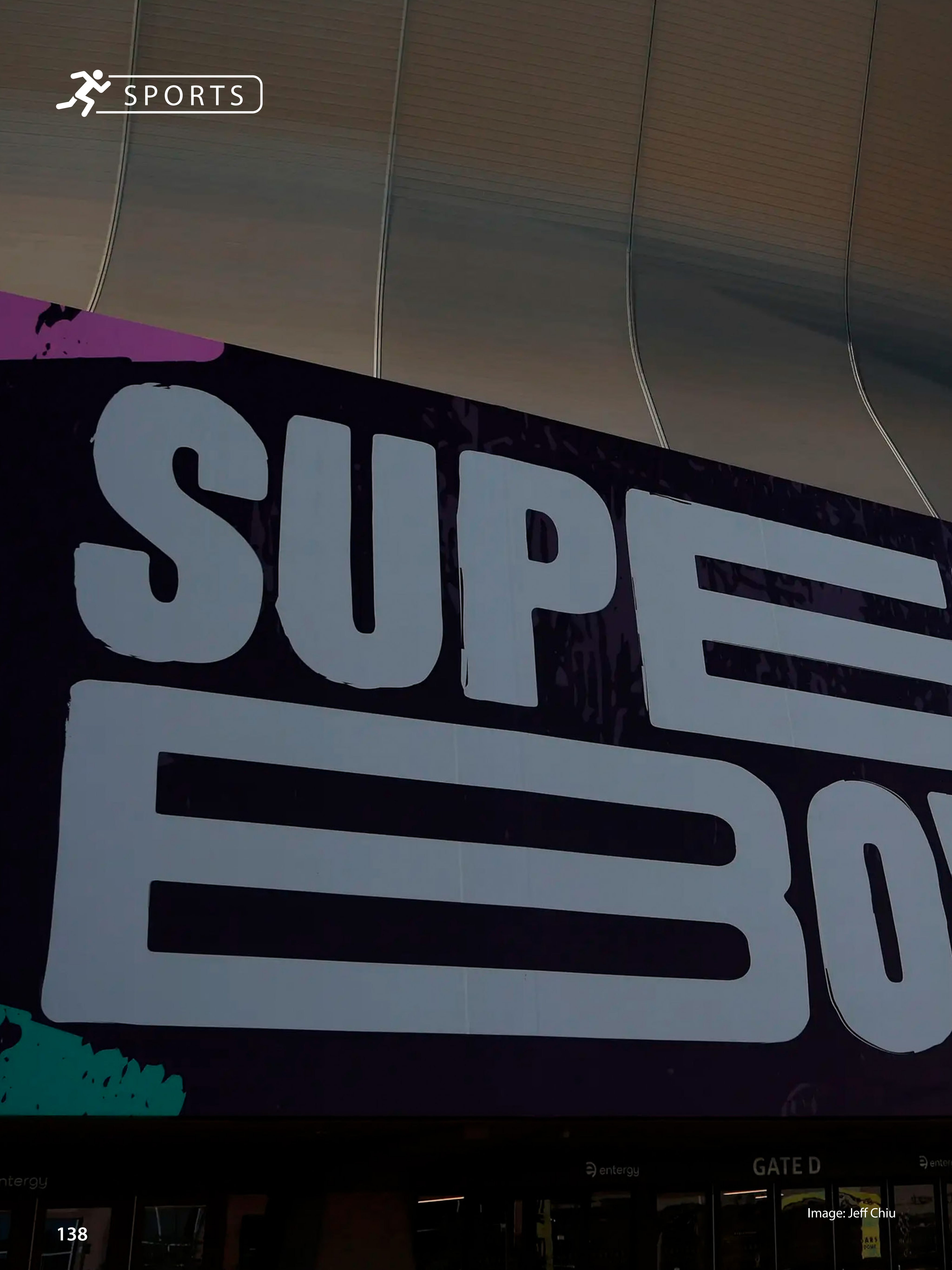
SUPER
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Image: Jeff Chiu

FOX PROJECTS THE SUPER BOWL AVERAGED A RECORD 126 MILLION U.S. VIEWERS

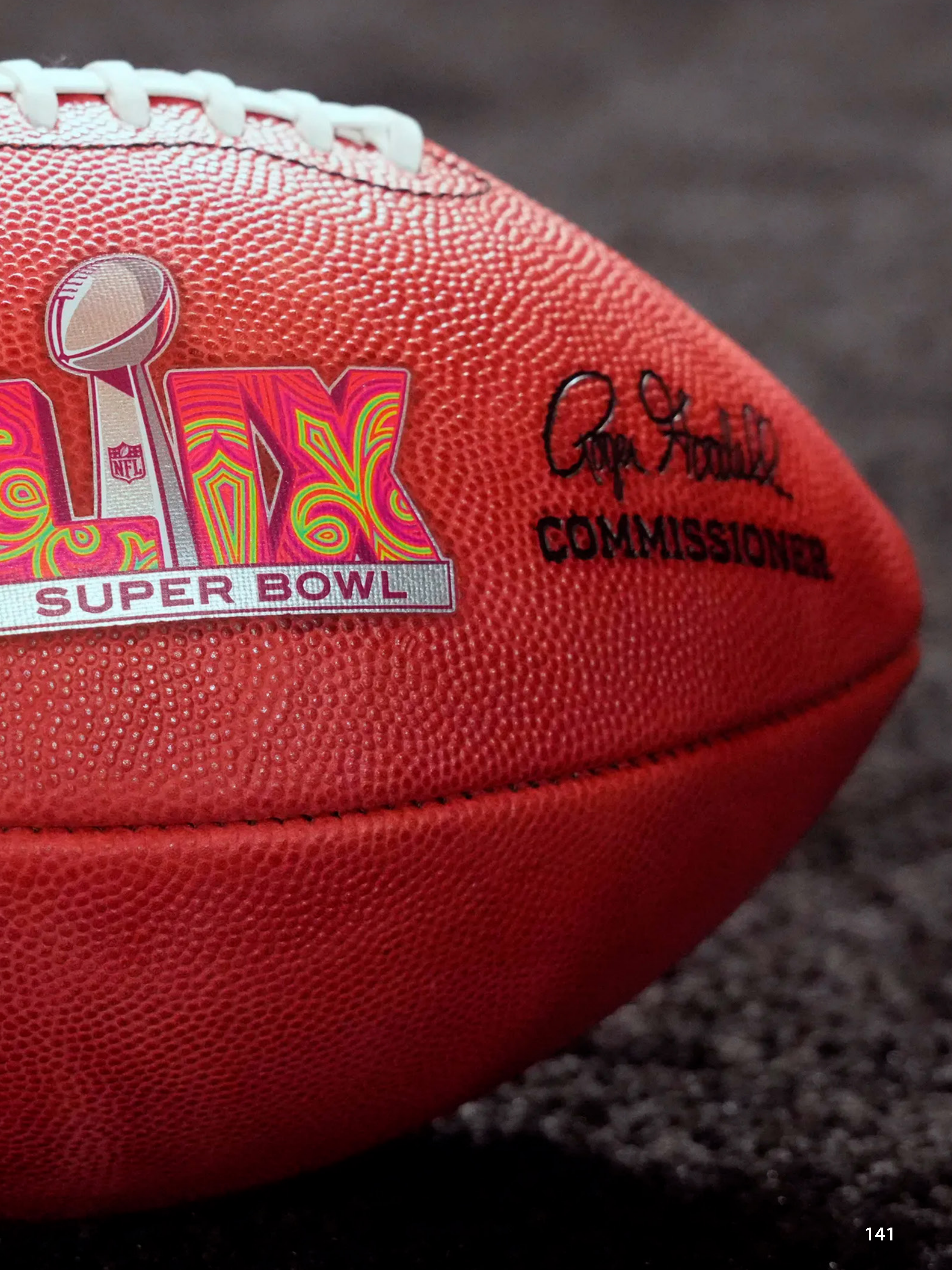
Fox Sports is projecting a Super Bowl record average audience of 126 million U.S. viewers across television and streaming platforms for Philadelphia's 40-22 victory over Kansas City on Sunday night.

The game was televised by Fox, Fox Deportes and Telemundo and streamed on Tubi as well as the NFL's digital platforms.

Fox's projections on Monday included Nielsen's early numbers and streaming data from Tubi and the NFL. Updated and more complete numbers were expected on Tuesday.

"THE DUKE"
Wilson

Image: Kirby Lee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SUPER BOWL
Roger Goodell
COMMISSIONER

NFL
SUPER BO
CHAMPIO
DELPHIA E
Whole

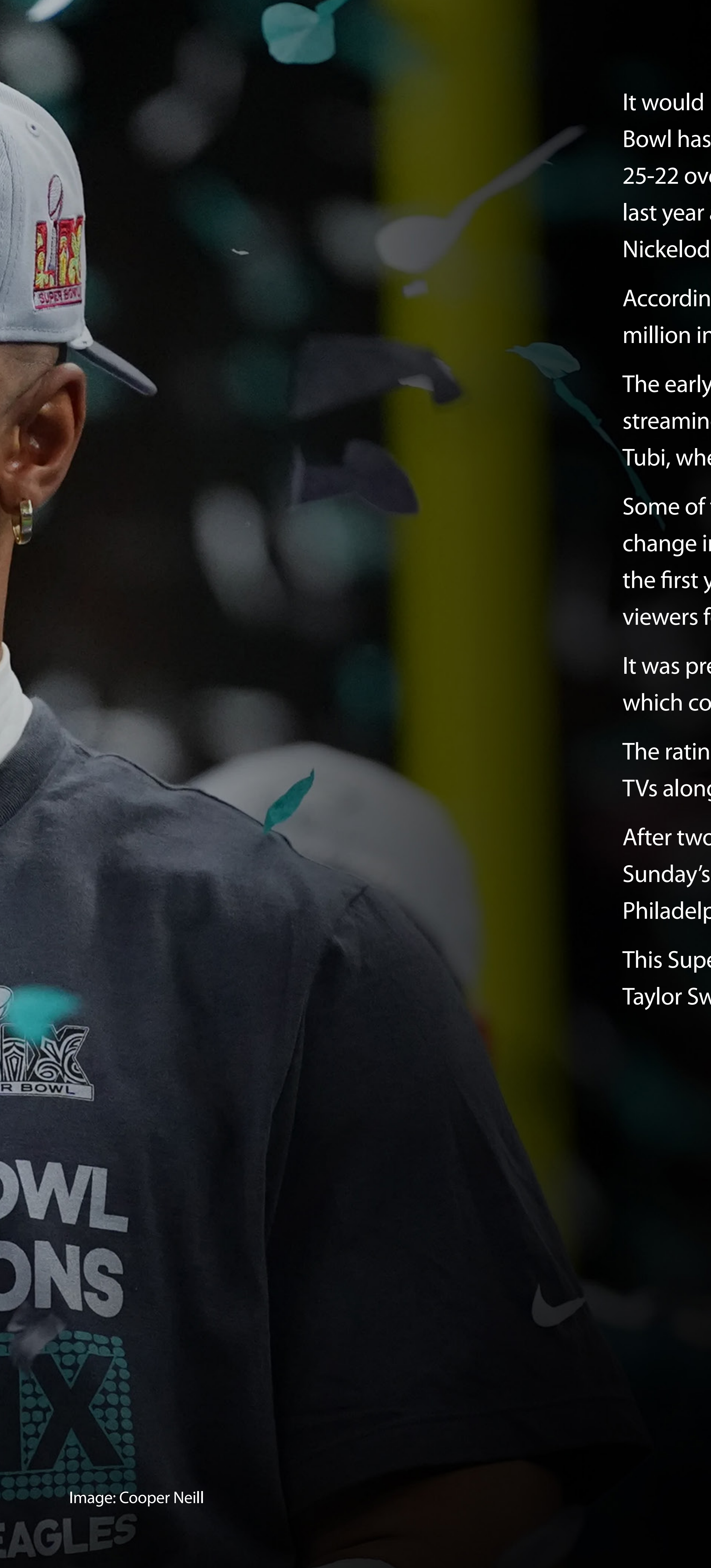

Image: Cooper Neill

It would be the second straight year the Super Bowl has reached a record audience. The Chiefs' 25-22 overtime victory over San Francisco last year averaged 123.7 million on CBS, Nickelodeon, Univision and streaming platforms.

According to Fox, the audience peaked at 135.7 million in the second quarter.

The early data projects 14.5 million watched on streaming platforms, including 13.6 million on Tubi, where the game was available for free.

Some of the increase can be attributed to a change in the way viewers are counted. This is the first year Nielsen is measuring out-of-home viewers for all states but Hawaii and Alaska.

It was previously the top 44 media markets, which covered 65% of the country.

The ratings also include Nielsen data from smart TVs along with cable and satellite set-top boxes.

After two straight years of close Super Bowls, Sunday's game was decided in the first half as Philadelphia built a 24-0 lead.

This Super Bowl also had Donald Trump and Taylor Swift in attendance.

BAUN
53
8
NFL
SUPER

22
42
27
BOWL

Image: Godofredo A. Vásquez

Trump was the first sitting president to attend a Super Bowl, while Swift's romance with Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce continues to keep the pop superstar's fans interested in the NFL.

It was the third straight year the Super Bowl averaged more than 100 million viewers after a period where four of the five games before 2023 had fallen short of that number because of cord-cutting. That included 95.2 million for the 2021 Super Bowl between Tampa Bay and Kansas City, which was the game's lowest TV-only average since 2007.

The NFL playoffs averaged 35.2 million viewers the first three weekends, down 9% from last year's record of 38.5 million.

That followed a regular season that averaged 17.5 million. While that was the sixth-highest average dating to 1995, it was a 2% decline from 2023.

Image: Mark J. Rebilas

Tyler Perry's Sistas

TOP 10 TV SHOWS

A STAR STUDDED AR-RIVAL
The Challenge: All Stars

LIFE IS A PROMISE
Yellowstone

COUNTING COUP
Yellowstone

GIVE THE WORLD AWAY
Yellowstone

DESIRE IS ALL YOU NED
Yellowstone

TWO STEPS FORWARD TEN STEPS BACK
Teen Mom: The Next Chapter

THE APOCALYPSE OF CHANGE
Yellowstone

THREE FIFTY-THREE
Yellowstone

SWEET HOME AUGUSTA
The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills

CALL ME BY HIS NAME
Tyler Perry's Sistas

Jonathan Kellerman

TOP 10 BOOKS

ONYX STORM
Rebecca Yarros

BONDED IN DEATH
J. D. Robb

DEEP END
Ali Hazelwood

IRON FLAME
Rebecca Yarros

OPEN SEASON
Jonathan Kellerman

THE LET THEM THEORY
Mel Robbins

FOURTH WING
Rebecca Yarros

BADLANDS
C. J. Box

ISOLA: REESE'S BOOK CLUB
Allegra Goodman

END OF WATCH
Stephen King

Sabrina Carpenter

TOP 10 SONGS

PINK PONY CLUB
Chappell Roan

BEAUTIFUL THINGS
Benson Boone

A BAR SONG (TIPSY)
Shaboozey

LOSE CONTROL
Teddy Swims

DIE WITH A SMILE
Lady Gaga & Bruno Mars

ABRACADABRA
Lady Gaga

BIRDS OF A FEATHER
Billie Eilish

I'M THE PROBLEM
Morgan Wallen

ESPRESSO
Sabrina Carpenter

NOT LIKE US
Kendrick Lamar

📷 *Bad Bunny*

TOP 10 ALBUMS

PARASOMNIA
Dream Theater

THE RISE AND FALL OF A MIDWEST...
Chappell Roan

LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL
Larry June, 2 Chainz & The Alchemist

HURRY UP TOMORROW
The Weeknd

FIREWORKS & ROLLERBLADES
Benson Boone

DEBÍ TIRAR MÁS FOTOS
Bad Bunny

ALLIGATOR BITES NEVER HEAL
Doechii

GNX
Kendrick Lamar

I'VE TRIED EVERYTHING BUT THERAPY...
Teddy Swims

SHORT N' SWEET
Sabrina Carpenter

📷 *Kendrick Lamar*

TOP 10 MUSIC VIDEOS

PINK PONY CLUB
Chappell Roan

ABRACADABRA
Lady Gaga

BEAUTIFUL THINGS
Benson Boone

I'LL DO IT (FEAT. PITBULL)
Heidi Montag

DIE WITH A SMILE
Lady Gaga & Bruno Mars

HARD FOUGHT HALLELUJAH
Brandon Lake & Jelly Roll

NOT LIKE US
Kendrick Lamar

NO LOSS, NO LOVE
Spiritbox

APT.
ROSÉ & Bruno Mars

BIRDS OF A FEATHER
Billie Eilish

THE WOMEN OF ‘THE WHITE LOTUS’ CHECK INTO SEASON 3 IN THAILAND

Get ready to check into “The White Lotus” in Thailand for Season 3 — this time, sadly, there’s no room for Jennifer Coolidge, who went overboard in the second season.

With the absence of her fan-favorite character Tanya comes the opportunity for other characters to win over the audience, when it returns to screens on Sky and HBO this Sunday.

Vying for your love or loathing at the indulgent Thailand outpost is Michelle Monaghan’s vacationing TV actor and Aimee Lou Wood’s cool Brit. Natasha Rothwell is back as spa manager Belinda, herself a victim of Tanya’s flighty financial

MOOK

ways in the first season. Blackpink's Lisa makes her acting debut as a resort employee.

Lalisa Manobal, best known as Lisa to Blackpink fans, makes her acting debut on the third season of "The White Lotus." The multi-talented star spoke with The Associated Press about her upcoming album "Alter Ego" and the 2025 Blackpink world tour. (Feb. 10)

As before, in Mike White's anthology series, the rich holidaymakers are unable to upgrade themselves away from the sense of menace that lurks around the landscaped hotel grounds.

The cast? They're having a much better time.

A NIGHTMARE STAY IS A DREAM JOB

Monaghan cried when she found out she got the role of TV star Jaclyn.

"It was such a big deal and it's such an exciting opportunity," she explained, adding that she opened a bottle of Champagne to celebrate. As the show is popular, critically acclaimed and filmed in exotic locations, Monaghan, who recently featured in Apple TV+'s "Bad Monkey," agrees that starring in White's prestige drama is "hands down, no doubt about it" the best job on television.

Rothwell agrees with her. She returns as Belinda, who worked at the Hawaii resort, home to Season 1.

"I don't know what I did in a previous life to deserve this, but I'm so grateful to be a part of this family," Rothwell says.

Viewers told Rothwell that they were mad at the affluent Tanya for not investing in Belinda's dreams in the first season. The actor attributes this enthusiastic fandom to the show's initial release during the coronavirus-related lockdowns.

"That's what people wanted at a time when the world was at a standstill," she says. "It gave people a chance to sort of imagine and dream and watch the world of high-class vacationing and seeing the underbelly of it."

THERE WAS A BIT OF JET LAG

Not all the of cast found seven months away from home easy. Wood, who previously starred in Netflix's "Sex Education," says that living and working on location got "very claustrophobic."

"Usually you wrap and you go home. But it was like, wrap ... and then I would walk five steps to my little room. And then I'd be having breakfast in the morning and be like, 'Hi,' to all the crew that walking past," she explains. Looking back on it now, she treasures the experience before she finally went home to "remember" who she was. "It's like 'The Truman Show,'" she joked.

Rothwell's struggles were less existential, centering instead on the reptilian extras. Her character is half-guest and half-staff, in Thailand on a work trip to learn new rejuvenation techniques to take back to Hawaii.

"I'm very delicate when it comes to green, slimy things. So I had to tap into Belinda's approach to peace and calm and meditation when I would see those little guys," says Rothwell, who created and starred in "How to Die Alone."

THAILAND GETS TOP BILLING

Each season, the cast ventures to a new White Lotus resort in vacation hot spots. This time, along

STAY GOLD

with the scene-stealing monkeys (and reptiles), Thailand itself gets more of a storyline than Hawaii or Sicily did in the first two seasons.

Monaghan says that the characters (and therefore the cast) got to explore on a sightseeing tour: "They really leave the actual White Lotus resort. We see them discovering local joints and they really take in everything that Thailand has to offer. And I think that's a real departure from what we've seen before. And I think it makes the scope of the show feel a lot bigger."

"Audiences, too, will really love seeing so much of this country," agrees Rothwell. "It feels like another character."

WHAT NAME IS THE RESERVATION UNDER?

Monaghan's Jaclyn is on a girls trip with two old school friends, played by Carrie Coon and Leslie Bibb. Like her character, Monaghan has struggled to find time to get away with her friends and finds White's portrayal of the female dynamics true to life.

"I think he tagged along on a girls trip," she says, describing him as "a real keen observer of human behavior" and "like a sponge."

"So I think maybe he'd had a similar experience and so he was like, he wanted to bring that into the show," she added.

Wood's Chelsea has all the vibes and wardrobe of a vacationing Kate Moss. She's staying with her older partner Rick (Walton Goggins), who is not much fun to be around.

"She gets some really great lines, Mike has gifted me with that character," says Wood. "She has got that like rock star girlfriend thing, but her heart is just so gentle."

There are more women who play staff or vacationers. Blackpink's Thai singer Lisa, credited here as Lalisa Manoban, stars as Mook — one of the health mentors helping to pamper the guests, alongside Sri Lankan actor Shalini Peiris.

Lisa managed to fit in making her acting debut around working on her upcoming album "Alter Ego."

"I'm a huge fan of 'The White Lotus,'" she told The Associated Press at the Los Angeles premiere of the season Monday. "I'm just so happy to be on this."

Thailand's Lek Patravadi plays a White Lotus owner — she's also the resident diva, fabulously dressed and worshipped as such. Soaking up the sun in a family suite is Parker Posey, living the lavish lifestyle of Victoria Ratliff, who is staying with her husband (Jason Isaacs), two sons and daughter Piper, portrayed by Sarah Catherine Hook.

GETTING BEACH-READY

"It was literally like marinating yourself in 100% humidity," explains Monaghan of her weekly fake tan sessions, endured to get the golden glow of her sun-worshipping character.

"Every Sunday I was applying that fake tan and waiting all while my co-stars were down at the beach, you know, enjoying the sunset, having a beer. I was like in my hotel room waiting for this spray tan to dry," recalls Monaghan.

Wood got a real tan for the first time in her life. Despite being, in her own words, "translucent," spending seven months in Thailand gave her a slight color.

The White Lotus Season 3 | Official Trailer | Max

"Makes sense why I've never got one in like a two-week holibobs," quips Wood.

THE PLUS-ONE QUESTION

How do they each rank as potential travel companions? Wood reckons her laid-back character would be a great person to go on holiday with.

"Chelsea honestly could sit outside like a 7-Eleven and have a beer. As long as she had someone to chat to, she just doesn't mind," she says. "Although she doesn't stop talking. But that's also like me, she is a yapper."

Rothwell says Belinda's hospitality knowledge makes her an excellent vacation buddy.

"She's just a people person and I'm not in real life, like she's good with people and I'm very much an introvert and, you know, have social anxiety and get nervous tons and I feel like Belinda would get me out of my shell," Rothwell laughs.

And Monaghan's Jaclyn has a lot (of money) going for her as a plus-one.

"You're going to have a good time and she's paying for it too," says Monaghan, "so definitely go on holiday with her."

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AMAZON REPORTS STRONG EARNINGS FOR Q4, BUT STOCKS DIP DUE TO OUTLOOK FOR THE FIRST QUARTER

Amazon reported better-than-expected revenue and profits for the holiday shopping period, but its stocks dipped in after-hours trading due to disappointing guidance for the current quarter.

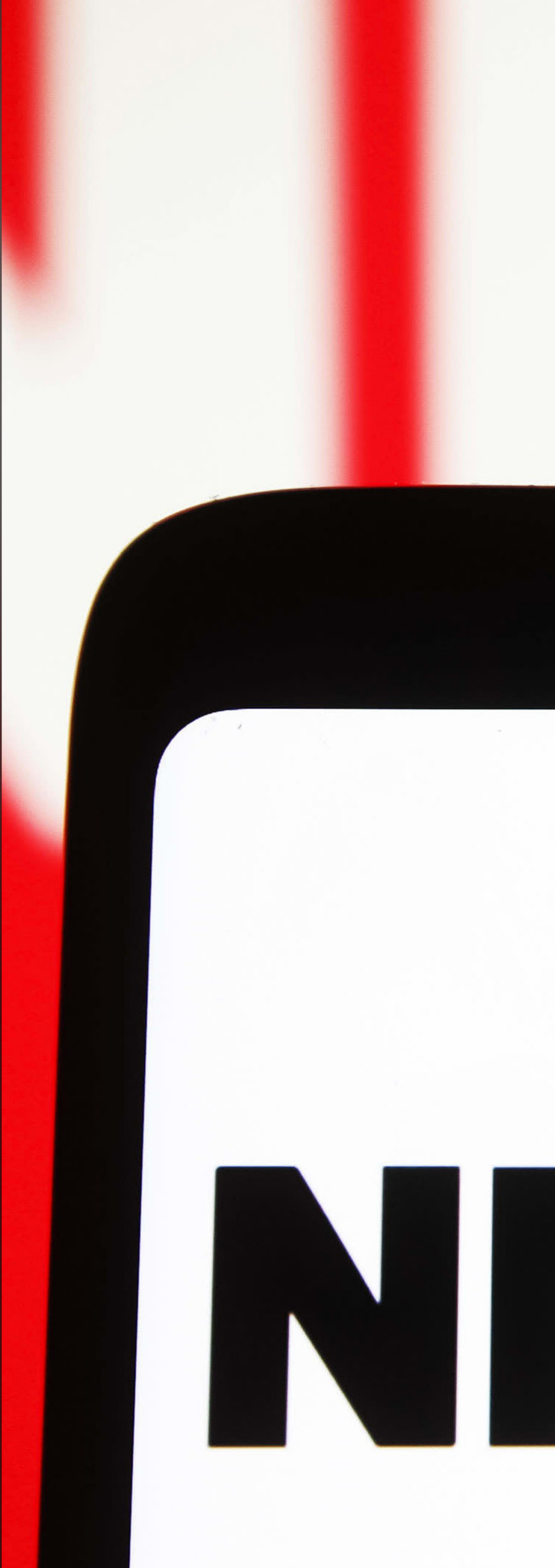
The Seattle-based e-commerce and technology company said its revenue for the October-December period totaled $187.8 billion, a 10% jump compared with the same period in 2023. Profits came out to $20 billion while earnings per share reached $1.86, higher than the $1.49 that analysts surveyed by FactSet had anticipated.

But the company said it expected revenue for the current quarter to be between $151 billion and 155.5 billion, lower than the $158.56 billion that analysts were expecting. The guidance anticipates "an unusually large, unfavorable impact" from foreign exchange rates, it said.

Amazon is the biggest online shopping destination in the U.S. and has long been a beneficiary of consumer spending during the holidays. As it has done in recent years, the company in October began offering promotions intended to lure early holiday shoppers. It advertised other discounts during the three-month period, including on major sales days such as Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

Amazon reported it saw $75.5 billion in revenue for its online shopping business, up 7% from the same period in 2023.

Across the retail industry, holiday sales in November and December were better than expected compared with the previous year as lower inflation on holiday goods enticed shoppers to buy, according to The National Retail Federation. Online shopping also



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saw record sales levels, Adobe Analytics reported in January.

Sales for Amazon Web services, the company's prominent cloud computing unit, rose 19% during the fourth quarter. But it fell slightly below analysts expectations.

Amazon is one of the biggest players in the competitive tech race around generative artificial intelligence. Like other tech companies, it has ramped up investments in the technology and is spending billions to expand data centers that support AI and cloud computing. The company is also spending money on other equipment, including its own computer chips and those developed by Nvidia. It has also rolled out its own AI models and integrated the generative AI into other parts of its business.

In the fourth quarter, Amazon reported spending $27.8 billion on property and equipment, significantly higher than the same period in 2023. During a call with analysts last week, Amazon CEO Andy Jassy said capital expenditures for the quarter came out to $26.3 billion, most of which was geared towards AI and AWS.

"We think virtually every application that we know of today is going to be re-invented with AI inside of it," Jassy said. "I think both our business, our customers and shareholders will be happy medium-to-long term that we're pursuing the capital opportunity and the business opportunity in AI."

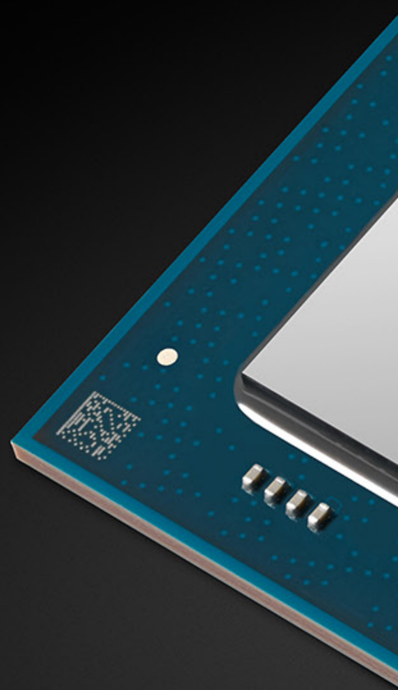
Jassy added during the call that Amazon, like many others, was "impressed" by DeepSeek, the Chinese artificial intelligence company whose chatbot recently became the most downloaded app in the U.S.

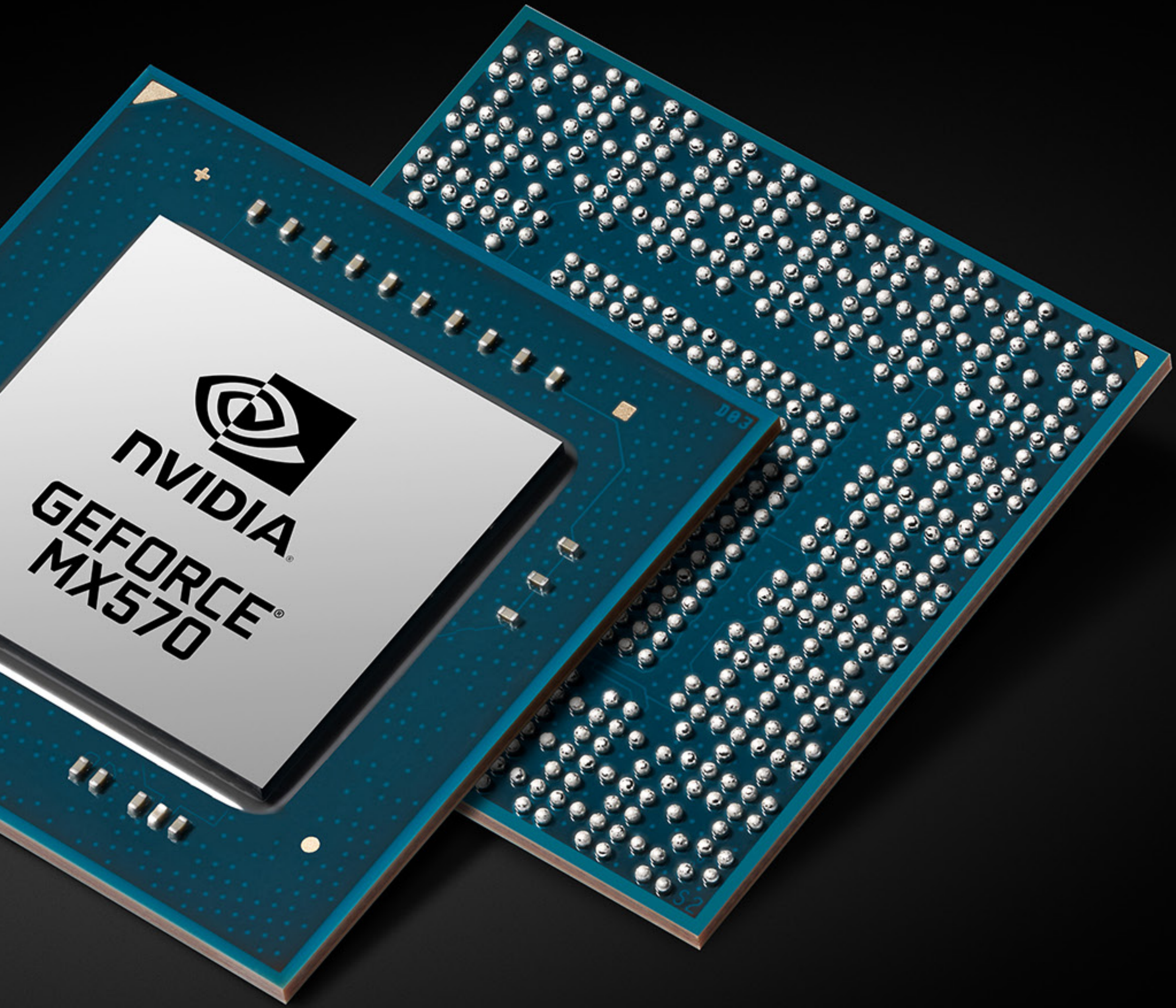
Amazon’s quarterly report comes as the retail industry is absorbing a new 10% tariff President Donald Trump imposed on Chinese imports. Tariffs on Canada and Mexico have been put on hold for about a month.

Trump also threw out a trade exemption that allowed low-value shipments from China to bypass duties, a loophole that had given an advantage to China-founded e-commerce firms, such as Shein and Temu.

The new tariffs could benefit Amazon by increasing costs for its competitors. But it would also impact Chinese sellers who connect with American consumers on the company’s shopping platform. Furthermore, it could raise prices on a recently-launched online storefront that Amazon set up to ship low-cost products directly from China. The storefront, called Amazon Haul, was Amazon’s answer to Shein and Temu.

Additionally, analysts from Morgan Stanley wrote in a note that Amazon’s first-party retail business, though which the company sells products purchased from manufacturers, has the highest exposure to the tariffs. The analysts estimate 25% of the merchandise sold through that business comes from China.

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JAPAN'S SOFTBANK REPORTS LOSS WEEKS AFTER ANNOUNCING AI INVESTMENT

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Japanese technology company SoftBank Group Corp. reported a 369.2 billion yen ($2.4 billion) loss for the fiscal third quarter as it racked up red ink from its Vision Fund investments.

That's compared to a 950 billion yen profit in October-December 2023.

Quarterly sales rose 3% from the previous year to 1.83 trillion yen ($11.9 billion), the Tokyo-based company said Wednesday.

The report comes barely a month after Masayoshi Son, the founder and chief executive, appeared with President Donald

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Trump in Washington, as well as with Sam Altman of OpenAI and Larry Ellison of Oracle, to announce an investment of up to $500 billion into an artificial intelligence project called Stargate.

Son has repeatedly said the company is banking on a future in artificial intelligence.

SoftBank Group invests in an array of companies that it sees as holding long-term potential, including unlisted upstarts, so its financial performance tends to swing wildly.

For the nine months of this fiscal year through December, it recorded a profit of 636 billion yen ($4 billion), a reversal from a loss of 459 billion for the previous year.

Investment gains were recorded in its holdings in Chinese e-commerce company Alibaba; Coupang, a South Korean retailer based in the U.S.; a mobility service provider DiDi Global and Grab Holdings, a Singaporean technology company, while improved sales came in its British semiconductor company Arm’s business.

Some of the investment gains from the earlier months of this fiscal year were erased in the latest quarter. The company does not issue an annual forecast.

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